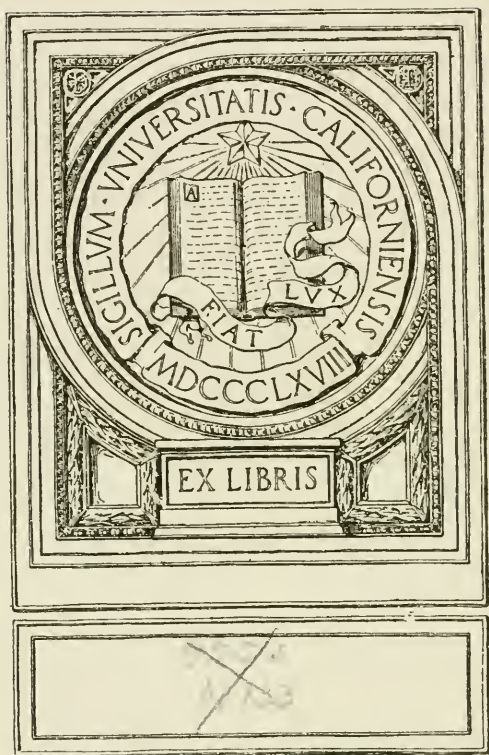


SIR  
WALTER SCOTT'S  
FRIENDS

FLORENCE MACCUNN









Sir Walter Scott's Friends



# Sir Walter Scott's Friends

1771-1838

BY

FLORENCE MACCUNN

AUTHOR OF

'LIFE OF JOHN KNOX,' 'LIFE OF MARY STUART'

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DEAR MR DOUGLAS,—

*As Editor of 'The Journal' and of 'The Letters,' your name is inseparably linked with that of Sir Walter Scott. Your conversation first suggested the subject of the present volume, your generosity supplied much of the material used, your unfailing interest and sympathy quickened the pleasure of writing it. To no one may it be so fitly dedicated as to you, by*

*Your grateful and affectionate friend,*

*F. A. MACCUNN.*

334026



## P R E F A C E.

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A FEW words seem necessary to explain certain obvious omissions in this account of Sir Walter Scott's Friends.

It was from no failure to recognise her position both in literature and in Scott's regard that I have devoted no chapter to Maria Edgeworth, but simply because, having read Miss Lawless's recently published biography of Miss Edgeworth, I felt that I could neither add to the contents nor rival the charm of that admirable monograph. A similar reason has excluded Scott's "kind, bustling friend," Mrs Hughes of Uffington. The volume of her Journal and Correspondence with Scott is still fresh in the memories of most readers. A contrary reason has, to my regret, caused the omission of one of the dearest of Scott's friends, Lady Abercorn. In the various biographies of the period with which my work has made me familiar, allusions are few and shadowy to Lord and Lady Abercorn, nor, in this case, has it been my good fortune to have access to any unpublished papers or to private information. Of Lockhart it did not seem necessary to write separately, not only because a full and detailed biography is of recent publication, but because implicitly Lockhart's spirit and Lockhart's judgment are present in every paragraph that deals with Scott and Scott's intimates.

The gravest omission is that, in a book dealing with Sir Walter's Friends, no place has been found for a chapter on The Dogs. I can only regretfully plead that my pen is wholly inadequate for a subject which only Dr John Brown could have treated duly.

To the making of this book have gone more help and kindness than I can sufficiently acknowledge.

My thanks are due to Mr David Douglas, editor of 'The Letters' and of 'The Journal' of Sir Walter Scott, who allowed me at every point to draw upon his minute and sympathetic knowledge of all that relates to Scott, and who placed his well-equipped library at my service; to Miss Hope of Luffness, who has been practically my collaborator in the chapters relating to her kinsfolk, the Dukes of Buccleuch, Lady Douglas of Douglas, and Lady Louisa Stuart, generously giving me access to letters and journals hitherto unpublished, and, from family tradition, supplying such intimate touches as may be found in those chapters; to the Honourable James Home, for much acute criticism and excellent suggestion; to the Earl of Home, for permission to use certain MS. volumes of verse written in the eighteenth century at Dalkeith Palace and at Bothwell Castle; also for permission to reproduce his replica of the portrait of Lady Frances Scott and her brothers, by Sir Joshua Reynolds; to Colonel Home Drummond, the possessor of the original picture, for endorsing that permission; to the Duke of Buccleuch, for permission to reproduce the print from the water-colour by Heaphy, of Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch; to Mrs Godfrey Clark, of Tol-y-garn, for permission to quote from her book, 'Gleanings from an Old Portfolio'; to Lord Ranfurly, for leave to reproduce the miniature of Lady Louisa Stuart by Mrs Mee; to Miss Hunter Baillie of Long Calderwood, for



permission to use the unpublished correspondence between her grand-aunt, Miss Joanna Baillie, and Miss Mary Berry; to Miss Carruthers, Montreal, Canada, for permission to use some unpublished letters of her grandfather, William Laidlaw; to Mr John Richardson, I.C.S., for permission to quote from the MS. of his grandfather's Diary; to Mr Fraser Tytler of Woodhouselee, for permission to quote from the Commonplace Book of his ancestor, Lord Woodhouselee; to Mrs Anderson of Fetykyl House, Leslie, for permission to reproduce the medallion of Countess Purgstall by Thorwaldsen in her possession; to Professor Pringle-Pattison, and to Mrs G. E. Forbes, for kindly supplying prints from which illustrations have been made. Nor would I leave unrecorded my gratitude to the late Mr John Doyle of Pendarren, who kindly allowed me to use certain MS. letters of Mrs Anne Keith in his possession, since bequeathed to the Library of All Souls' College, Oxford. Finally, my thanks are due to Mr W. P. Ker, who has kindly revised the proofs of this book.

LIVERPOOL, *September 22, 1909.*



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I.

OLD LADIES OF SIR WALTER'S  
YOUTH

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ALISON RUTHERFORD (MRS COCKBURN)  
MRS ANNE MURRAY KEITH



## ALISON RUTHERFORD

(MRS COCKBURN).

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WALTER SCOTT was born on the 15th of August 1771, in a flat of a high-gabled house in a little court at the head of the College Wynd. The College Wynd led up from the deep valley of the Cowgate to the University buildings,—not the present domed edifice of the Brothers Adam, but the long line of low-roofed buildings enclosing three quadrangles which formed the original College, built in the sixteenth century on the site of Kirk-o'-Field of unhallowed memory. The College Wynd still bore at times its pre-Reformation title, the Wynd of the Blessed Virgin Mary-in-the-fields; old armorial scutcheons still ornamented lintels or gables of the old houses around. A turnpike stair in the corner of the court gave access to the flat where Mr Walter Scott, W.S., had his dwelling in close proximity to that of his wife's kinsman, Sir Alexander Keith of Ravelston.

We are familiar, from endless memoirs and tales, with the domestic arrangements of these flats,—the dirty stairs, the dark entry, the lady's bedroom where she received her friends at tea, the room where the master did business by day and the children with their nurse slept by night, the small windows looking out on a wilderness of roofs and gables and chimneys. Everywhere there was a lack of air and light, nowhere room for play. A steep stair, a dirty court, a narrow wynd lay between the

children and the smoky College gardens where they were probably sent with their reluctant nursemaid.

Six little brothers and sisters had succumbed to these conditions: the parents' stoical piety had at last begun to question the decrees of Providence—perhaps at the suggestion of Mrs Scott's half-brother, Dr Daniel Rutherford, an eminent physician.

For the preceding ten years a pleasant suburb had been growing up south of the old city boundaries. George Square has now the quiet, dignified charm of a dowager who leaves the toils of fashion to a younger generation and lives upon her memories. A hundred and thirty years ago, to tenants of old Edinburgh the escape into the well-built, self-contained houses with the large square garden in front and the pleasant meadows behind, must have felt almost like a return to the country. Mr Scott may have had misgivings, the new suburb was considered remote from the centre of business; but his affairs were prosperous, and paternal solicitude silenced his scruples.

Sir Walter Scott belongs by birth to that old Edinburgh which he claimed as his "own romantic town," peopling it at will with the men and women who had walked up and down its streets from the days of Wallace till his own. The quiet Square where his boyhood and early manhood were passed is pure eighteenth century,—it was built about the years 1760-1765. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the stream of fashion had crossed the Bridges to the New Town and left the retired charm of the Square to dowagers and maiden ladies. It is especially with the New Town that we associate Scott. His shadowy presence gives romantic interest to well-built uniform houses, to ordinary street doors, to names as everyday as 39 North Castle Street.

Scott was two years old when Dr Johnson visited Boswell and was entertained by all the literati and savants of the Scottish Augustan age. His parents were

contemporaries, and possibly acquaintances, of all the well-known men of the time, but it is highly improbable that they met the distinguished stranger. They belonged to a distinct type of Scottish householders, serious, substantial, economical, formal though sincere both in religion and in hospitality, and contentedly indifferent to society, whether fashionable or literary. Their friends they saw in a quiet, intimate way. Among these intimates was the wittiest, the kindest—what she herself would have called the “heartsopest”—old lady in Edinburgh. This was Mrs Scott’s kinswoman, Mrs Cockburn, born Alison Rutherford of Fairnalee. Mrs Scott’s father, Professor John Rutherford, the son of a gently born minister of Yarrow, counted kin with the Rutherfords of Fairnalee.

One could find it in one’s heart to regret that Sir Walter has not given us more portraits of old Scottish ladies,—some outspoken Edinburgh dame, a pendant to Mr Councillor Pleydell, or a country gentlewoman as great in her own way as Monkbarns was in his. If he has not done so, it was not from lack of models to draw from. If the eighteenth century did not create the type of old Scottish gentlewoman,—shrewd, witty, warm-hearted, shirking none of the pains of life but rising above them with unconquerable vitality,—it at least afforded her scope and opportunity. The violence and tragic issues of earlier centuries kept women out of the play, except those of heroic virtues or vices. Covenanting times had indeed afforded the “devouter sex” opportunities for faithful endurance and for spiritual fervour, but wit and frank delight in life, and the pleasant society of unregenerate fellow-creatures, had no place found for them in that stormy period. In the transition period between the persecuted and persecuting seventeenth and the enlightened, social eighteenth century, stands a gracious figure, Lady Grizell Baillie. She struck the note that all the best and most character-

istically Scottish of her countrywomen have caught up from her—

“And werena my heart licht, I wad dee.”

Alison Rutherford had need of her “light heart” to carry her through the frequent losses and sorrows that filled the seventy years between the summer days when she rolled down the steep bank at Fairnalee in a child's ecstasy of wildness, and the winter days in Crichton Street when, a lonely old woman of eighty, she sang to the maids who carried her from her bed to her chair “to cheer the weariness of attendance.” Yet it is no contradiction to the constant zest she had in life that her one imperishable song should be a lament over the transitoriness of earthly wellbeing.

The world has long made up its mind on the comparative value of the two versions of the “Flowers of the Forest.” Miss Jean Elliot's is great poetry, the wailing of women left desolate in the day of defeat and death. It is a universal sorrow brought home to dear and familiar places. Yet for all their ornate, eighteenth century setting, there is a personal poignancy in Mrs Cockburn's version perhaps more haunting than Miss Elliot's noble verse.

“Oh, fickle Fortune, why this cruel sporting?  
Why thus perplex us, poor sons of a day?”

It was only through her heart, her warm eager affections, that Fortune could touch Alison Cockburn.

A woman who could write gaily of her married life: “Nobody kept a house of more resort. Nobody more in the gay world. Our whole income was £150 a-year, and we never owed a shilling”—was not vulnerable by Fortune. The Edinburgh society of that day, where no one was rich and every one believed himself to be well-born, if it did not rival French salons which cultivated wit and fine manners on a glass of *eau sucrée*, yet enjoyed hearty fun, excellent sense, and warm kindness



over "rizzared" haddocks or a "barn-door chucky." Mrs Cockburn herself regretted the days when we, in Scotland, imported our graces and our vices from France, and had not learnt from England to place all our enjoyment in the pleasures of the table. Her own brilliant little parties she likened to Dean Swift's description of Stella's entertainments—

"A supper like her mighty self:  
Four nothings, on four plates of delf."

Hospitality was her passion. A present of moor-fowl sent the fiery cross round among her acquaintances: she could not, she told them, keep good things to herself.

But, keeping as she did a vivid recollection of the days when she had been the chief ornament of Lamotte's dancing class in the Cowgate, her dearest social enterprise was a ball. Even to hear of such gaieties stirred her blood when she was quite old and confined to the house. "At the Archers' Ball all merry, and men, maidens, and matrons danced. I love to hear of it. It is like the days of my youth and health." The crowning achievement was when she herself gave a ball in her neat flat in Crichton Street.

"On Wednesday I gave a ball! . . . I think my house, like my purse, is just the widow's cruse. . . . Our fiddlers sat where the cupboard is, and they danced in both rooms; the table was stuffed into the window, and we had plenty of room, . . . nine couples always dancing. It made the bairns vastly happy."

There were less successful entertainments sometimes in Crichton Street. Once when David Hume was among the guests, Captain Adam Cockburn—Mrs Cockburn's only son—coming home drunk and sulky, locked himself into the room where the guests had left their outer garments and refused to listen to persuasion. But, even then, the queer ill-fitting rigs supplied by a neighbour

occasioned gusts of laughter—especially the figure cut by David Hume.

Nothing is funnier and, in its way, a pleasanter tribute than the attitude of his Edinburgh friends and cronies to Hume. The penetrating analysis which, Kant declared, roused him from his dogmatic slumber, the formulas which are the foundation of all empirical scepticism from his day to ours, were treated by friendly divines and quick-witted ladies with affectionate impatience as wilful eccentricities or affectations in an otherwise worthy and easily comprehended character. Lord Chief-Commissioner Adam, who, in his youth, had known and loved the stout sceptic, speaks of his philosophy as “intellectual rope-dancing.”

Mrs Cockburn could never persuade herself that her friend's opinions sprang from a perverted nature. “I remember,” she wrote to him, “that, in spite of vain philosophy, of dark doubts, of toilsome learning, God had stamped His image of benignity so strong on thy heart that not all the labours of thy head could efface it.” But she never lost hope of his conversion to a more sensible view of things. Once after she had been deeply moved by converse with an apostolic (but unreasonable) old saint on his death-bed, her first impulse was “to sit down instantly to write to David Hume.” She told the incident long afterwards, when Hume was dead. Her fine Moderate creed took at least a hopeful view of the philosopher's final destination. “But the reason David did not know he was a Christian was a total want of fire,—ethereal fire. He was phlegmatick, material, and, I daresay, will now wonder he is alive and to know (*sic*) what nonsense he wrote!”

The Captain Adam whose sulky tipsiness upset his mother's party was but a sorry son for such a mother. Embittered by lack of promotion and thwarted in a love affair, he died morose and silent in 1780. Her light heart did not preserve Alison Cockburn from poignant





MRS COCKBURN.

*From a Miniature.*



suffering. She describes herself as walking in the wind and rain, or standing at the big spinning-wheel, till nature, physically exhausted, lost all capacity for thinking. So near did sorrow go to the spring of her being that she could only thank God who had preserved her reason. Yet she came out of the valley of the shadow to find that every human being of her acquaintance was a filament binding her to life, so quick and true were her sympathies. "A veteran in sorrow" she describes herself, but she neither grew numb to pain through weariness of it nor would she suffer sorrow to obscure the normal gladness of life. First and last, she would eat at the feast of life to the last crumb.

As she grew older she restricted her society. "I hate visiting unless the sick or sorry, or to dine and sup with the hospitable and merry." But she could burst out royally from her self-chosen seclusion: "I saw none but the sick and afflicted till I broke out like a star at the Peers' Assembly, where I walked in by myself at nine o'clock. I was so surrounded by men that I saw no women till near ten, and then was as much rejoiced over by the women. . . . A vast exhibition of vanity, say you, in this old lady! Very true, reverend sir, and I will be vain, while I live, of the attention and good-will of all my compatriots. Ay, and try to keep it up; for there is nothing so pleasant and wholesome to the human heart as to love and be loved."

There ought to be a more genial word than vanity for the delight—free from egotism or emulation—that wholesome human beings take in the love and praise and even flattery—so it be not too serious—of their fellows. Mrs Cockburn herself classed vanity along with hope as the "great enliveners of life."

With her other fine qualities this pleasing vanity only ripened and sweetened as she grew older.

"You mention a lady of seventy-two—once much admired," she writes gaily to her favourite corres-

pondent, the young minister of Galashiels. "That lady begs leave to inform you that she has more admirers and real lovers now than she had at seventeen, and refers you to your own feeling of her perfections!"

To find a parallel to Mrs Cockburn's lightness of touch combined with depth of feeling, to her shrewdness qualifying warmth of heart, one must go to a contemporary of her own. Eighteenth century Edinburgh and eighteenth century Frankfurt were probably entirely oblivious of each other's existence. It might be possible to find points of likeness in the society of the old free City and of the deserted Capital, and we may at least begin by comparing the raciest old lady in each, Mrs Cockburn and Frau Schultheiss Goethe. So closely parallel are passages in their letters that "on a forgotten matter" one can scarcely "make decision between their hands."

Was this dated Crichton Street or Hirschgraben?—

"I am very fond of my kind, and they all feel it, young and old alike. . . . I go through the world with no great pretensions, which suits my fellow-mortals both male and female, never bemoralise any one, always try to find out the good side of people and leave the bad to Him who created us all and knows how to file off the rough edges."

Or this? "Do you know, I am afraid of too much respect. I am such a coquet (*sic*) I like LOVE better than reverence."

There was, as belonged to her race, an easier optimism in the religion of the German lady. The fear of the Lord, the sense of judgment to come, broods, a salutary cloud, on the clear-cut Scottish mind. Mrs Cockburn has no doubts of personal immortality, rather she accepts it as a fact awful in its issues. "Die you must, live you must and eternally too, whether you will or not," she writes to Ladies Anne and Margaret Lindsay,—women of whom she could say that they "were born with minds—which is not so common as we vulgarly imagine." She had silently thought herself free from the bonds of Cal-

vinistic orthodoxy. "You are tried by a just Judge, one who knows what we are made of and knows we are frail. Did He descend from heaven in vain? Did He wear our form, and is it possible to suppose that He will not restore the image first given and lost—restore it even to Dr Dod,<sup>1</sup> and to a far worse man, Alexander Fordyce?"<sup>2</sup> This was her hope; her practice was a constant schooling of her spirit in submission and contentment. This acquiescence in the disciplining forces of life—"the Lord's will," as they reverently called it—has always been the moving force in the religion of Scotsmen. This gave stability to the overstrained spirituality of Covenanting times; this gave dignity to the Evangelicalism which in the early nineteenth century spread from England; this was the life and strength of eighteenth century Moderatism; this was strong in the soul of Walter Scott when he faced financial ruin with instant fortitude and unfaltering patience—"I think the Romans call it Stoicism."

With Mrs Scott Mrs Cockburn had the intimacy which permits kinsfolk free access to one another in all the elementary joys and sorrows and trials of life. In February 1768 Mrs Cockburn writes to Lady Anne Lindsay, "I am a good deal fatigued with seeing much distress, though I am comforted by seeing Mrs Scott. She is really recovering and very happy." From the date it was probably after the birth of her first child who survived. In her will Mrs Cockburn writes, "I promised Mrs Walter Scott my emerald ring—with it she has my prayers for her and hers; much attention she and her worthy husband paid me in my hours of deepest distress, when my son was dying." It was characteristic of the staid Writer to the Signet to be more at home in the house of mourning than in the house of mirth.

<sup>1</sup> Popular preacher and forger. See Boswell's 'Life of Johnson,' vol. iii. pp. 139-149 (Dr Birkbeck Hill's edition).

<sup>2</sup> Banker and bankrupt, husband of Lady Margaret Lindsay. See 'Lives of the Lindsays,' vol. ii. p. 336.



When Mrs Cockburn flashed in on the quiet household in 25 George Square she brought not only gossip about Border kinsfolk and racy talk from her gayer social life, but a heart and ear eager to share the domestic interests of her friends.

There are few scenes in history or biography that we can so completely visualise as the evening of Friday, 14th November 1777, when Mrs Cockburn happened to sup at Mrs Walter Scott's, and found the "extraordinary genius of a boy," aged six, reading Falconer's 'Shipwreck' to his mother. The room is still there, an oblong drawing-room with three long narrow windows looking out on the square garden. In those days, when the classical taste of the Brothers Adam was the vogue, all the rooms in George Square had high plaster mantelpieces delicately moulded in vases and garlands. Mrs Cockburn on that evening looked probably much as we know her in her portrait, taken some years earlier, for she boasts that the auburn hair (turned back under a lace kerchief) kept its brightness till a later age. Nor would there be much change in the quick kindly glance, the clear-cut brow and nose, the humorous irregular lower jaw; even the fashion of her dress, the white lute-string sacque and transparent black lace cape, may have been unchanged, for Mrs Cockburn prided herself on setting, not following, fashions of dress. The child reading on the sofa wears a wide muslin collar like a girl's, and his curls fall down his neck in feminine fashion, but the wonderful dome is already characteristic, and the painter of the miniature done at this time has tried in vain to idealise into prettiness the long upper lip and heavy round nose. The same homely features and look of good-tempered shrewdness belong also to the mother sitting by his side. They came to both from old Dr Rutherford, whose homely, heavy, sensible face hangs in the rooms of the Edinburgh College of Physicians. So the two virtuosos—as the child described

himself and his new friend—sat on the sofa and thrilled over the ‘Shipwreck,’ and gravely discussed Milton together.

It adds a touch of pleasantness to the story that the correspondent to whom it was told was the Rev. Dr Douglas, minister of Galashiels, from whom thirty years later the wonderful boy was to buy the small estate of Clarty Hole, rechristened Abbotsford.

## MRS ANNE MURRAY KEITH.

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MRS COCKBURN's was not the only observant eye which had noticed the singular genius of Mr Walter Scott's little lame boy. In Hyndford Close the Lindsays of Balcarres had their town hotel in neighbourly proximity to the flat inhabited by Dr John Rutherford and his two daughters, Misses Christian and Jeanie Rutherford. No child of genius lacks a trumpeter who has a maiden aunt. Miss Jeanie Rutherford (afterwards Mrs Russel of Ashestiel) used to boast to Lady Anne Lindsay of her nephew Walter Scott, as "the most wonderful child for mind and genius." Walter Scott and the author of "Auld Robin Gray" appear never to have met, but as a child he was taken to wait on her mother, Lady Balcarres, for he kept a distinct impression of the harpsichord and the Indian screen with Harlequin and Columbine. By the time he was grown up, witty Lady Anne, and beautiful Lady Margaret, and brilliant Lady Elizabeth, had all found homes in the Southern kingdom; the Honourable Robert, John, Colin, and the five other brothers were abroad governing provinces, winning laurels, and amassing fortunes in every quarter of the globe; and the little Countess, her life's work done, but many long peaceful years still before her, had settled down to her theatre-going, her knotting, and her delighted perusal of the Scriptures.

No story of child-life—not even "Holiday House"—



is so vivid and full of character and incident as Lady Anne's narrative in the 'Lives of the Lindsays.' There is enough of lively mischief and of condign punishment in it to satisfy the most exacting childish reader. An older reader discerns under the quick temper and severity of her imperious ladyship, the Countess, the strain and anxiety of a house-mother struggling to keep up the dignity of an ancient race, and to clothe, feed, and educate eleven lively children on the produce of a sorely-burdened estate. She was still a young woman when her very old lord died in 1768, leaving her to fend and plan, to rule and discipline, and to speed one gallant boy after the other into the world where perhaps they met the buffets of Fortune the more light-heartedly from the experience they had had of her ladyship's whippings and starvings.

In 1790, when little over sixty, this worn-out little mother found herself as solitary as if she had never had a child. The daughters—Anne still a spinster, and Margaret long a widow—invited her to share their home in London, but the little Countess had a high-minded disdain of a country where she had been treated as a nobody because she was not rich: "No, no, ladies, no residences but in my own country. A visit perhaps you may have from me if I think myself well enough to go to Court to see my flirt, the king, but even that must be a short one."

Now that rest and ease of mind had come, the strain told,—something snapped in the active brain. But if memory was gone, all harshness and irritability were gone with it. The small things of every day sufficed to make her happiness; the dutiful children were dearly welcome on their flying visits, but hardly missed when they left.

It was characteristic of old Scottish society—when wealth was rare and family ties strong—that there was in every family one or more unmarried kinswomen ready

to step in when needed, to take charge of motherless children, to nurse the ailing, amuse the splenetic, or care for the old. Not colourless old maids or humble companions, these ladies, but generally women of family, often women of the world, and always women of character. The lady who in 1794 established herself with old "Lady Bal" as companion—"chum" is the curiously modern term the two ladies applied to one another—was her cousin, Mrs Anne Murray Keith (unmarried ladies of sufficient importance received brevet rank in those days, like Mrs Hannah More). The dowager had her jointure, the spinster her small independent income, which was increased to a competence on the death of her eldest brother four years later. They found "the best imagined house possible for two Tabbies" in the elegant retirement of George Square. The house was probably a corner house, for Mrs Anne describes it as consisting of a flat and sunk storey—"the upper part of the house no more connected with us than the sky." Lady Balcarres was so assiduous in her attendance at the theatre that her grave sister-in-law, Countess Elizabeth, called her "the theatre wife." A young neighbour in George Square, Walter Scott, had the same love for a play, and he records gratefully how her ladyship made him free of her box when he was a "lubberly boy." Mrs Anne loved cards and company, and political gossip and belles-lettres—such as amused her. Above all, she had the gift of story-telling, and could tell her guest stories of the *Vieille Cour* in her beautiful old Holyrood Scots.

We know Walter Scott as the best teller of stories that the world has known. Certain old ladies of the eighteenth century knew what it was to have him as a listener, to see the heavy brows drawn down in concentrated attention, the glower in the eyes when the voice of the teller was heavy with horror, the sudden bright smile when the story had a humorous turn.

The habit of telling stories died with the eighteenth century. The art of those old Scottish ladies had nothing in common with our conversational trick of flashing a pointed anecdote across a dinner-table, to die gladly in a breeze of laughter. Their stories were drawn from family traditions,—family pride cherished every minute circumstance; by much repetition these tales had acquired the completeness, the inevitableness of a Greek tragedy. The omens, the atmosphere of doom, the background of dark superstition, and, woven through these, the realistic touches, grotesque Scottish character, crude Scottish speech: such are the characteristics of Scottish romance, as manifestly present in the ‘Master of Ballantrae’ and ‘Weir of Hermiston’ as in ‘Waverley’ and the ‘Bride of Lammermoor,’ and their origin is to be found in the tales of such old kinswomen as Scott’s cousin, Mrs Margaret Swinton, and his honoured friend Mrs Anne Murray Keith.

Probably no great fiction was ever the work of pure invention. It is when the imagination has been haunted by something seen or heard, some conjunction of human fate, some shadowy tradition, that its powers of vision become creative. That this was the case with most of the Waverley novels, we have the evidence of Sir Walter’s Introductions. The stories told by his old friend Mrs Keith were as seed dropped into a teeming soil. She was never in the smallest doubt as to the authorship of the novels. “Should I no’ ken my ain groats in anither man’s kail?” she used to ask serenely.

Two elements gave romance to old Scottish society,—the poverty which scattered families east and west in pursuit of fortune, and the strong family ties which bound the most distant kinsfolk in the bonds of mutual service. In the eighth decade of the century the young Lindsays were all, in the eternal fairy-tale fashion, “going out into the world to seek their fortune”; twenty years earlier their cousins, the two gallant Keiths,

had started on the same errand; ten years later both families united their efforts and influence to open similar careers for a young family of cousins, the Dicks of Prestonfield. The Keiths had been the earliest in the field; this procured them the privilege of having the more to help.

Poverty, family pride, and sometimes family feuds brought it about that elopements were a common prelude to marriages in the Scotland of the eighteenth century. It argued no lightness of mind when Margaret Cunningham of Caprington<sup>1</sup> ran off in 1729 with Robert Keith of Craig, a light-hearted, penniless slip of the historic house of Keith Marischall. Mrs Cockburn has told us how a young couple might live in the fashion in Edinburgh on an income of £150 a-year, but that income will scarcely support appearances and supply food and clothing for a family of hearty children even if they are clothed—as Mrs Anne tells us that her brothers were—in “ticking” to stand the wear and tear of school “bickers.”

The effort to make such gaping ends meet probably shortened Margaret Keith's life. She died while her surviving children—two sons and three daughters—were quite young, but she had lived long enough to stamp on their minds principles which sped them through life with dignity and elasticity.

Wherever their lot was cast, at the centre of European diplomacy or in Colonial governments, at Court festivities or in darkened sick-rooms, in the negotiations of kings or the service of kinsfolk, the Keiths, men and women, knew themselves to be animated by the same proud honesty, the same loyalty to whoso employed them, the same contempt of profit and reward, the same boundless family affection, the same whole-hearted delight in nonsense. The eldest son, Sir Robert,

<sup>1</sup> There were two baronetcies in the family: her elder brother was Sir John Cunningham of Caprington, the younger Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield. An elder sister was Lady Dalrymple, mother of Lady Balcarres.



was eleven when his mother died ; he was forty-four when he wrote these words to his uncle, Sir Alexander Dick, about himself and his brother and sisters : " We are greedy and tenacious of the good opinion of the public and of the warmest private affections. To our wants and wishes for every other species of wealth your angel of a sister did happily set the narrowest bounds with the first and strongest impressions of reason and example."

Within these bounds so early and so firmly placed, the wit, the urbanity, the inexhaustible zest in life of the Keiths might safely flourish.

The death of an adored wife, the necessity of ampler provision for five children, awakened the energies of Robert Keith the elder. He who till middle life had been content to be a man of pleasure, proved himself a Scotsman of the indomitable Quentin Durward breed, a worthy cousin of Frederick's Marshal Keith and Rousseau's Earl Marischall. He had a prosperous career as ambassador, first at Vienna, then at St Petersburg ; " the creature of nobody"—it is his son's boast of him,—" but winning all he got by merit and attention to business."

Meanwhile the devoted kinswoman who was never lacking to Scottish families—in this case a half-sister of Mr Keith's, a Miss Stirling of Keir, the beloved Aunt Bab—brought up his children in Spartan simplicity. The boys were early thrown on the world : Robert was a major commanding a regiment of Highlanders in the allied army in Germany under Prince Ferdinand before he was twenty-nine. So early was Basil bred to the sea that he was in action when only eleven, his captain being shot down still holding the child's hand. The daughters were women verging on middle life when, in 1764, the old ambassador returned to wear out his days in his own country.

The return of the native always involves a certain disillusionment. That Keith found Edinburgh and Edinburgh society little changed was precisely the

reason that he no longer felt at home in either. He had grown fastidious; the noise and squalor of the old town were intolerable to him. For ten years he lived in a villa near Leith Sands called the Hermitage, where, in emulation of his brother-in-law, Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield, he devoted much of his time to gardening. It was an art recently introduced into Scotland, and full of experiment. When one reads of melons grown in Mr Keith's garden and a "profusion of perfectly ripe apricots, peaches, plums, and figs" under Sir Alexander's sunny wall in the shelter of Arthur's Seat, one is tempted to wonder if their summers were hotter or their standard of ripeness lower than ours. No one took a keener interest than the Keiths in the New Town that was rising on a stately, symmetrical plan on the north side of the valley. From Vienna Sir Robert was always asking for news of "New Reekie." In 1774, a few months before his death, Mr Keith had bought one of the newly-built houses in Princes Street, that long terrace which was stretching westwards along the Nor' Loch.

At the Hermitage fashionable novels occupied the gay old gentleman's mornings, such London publications being reproduced cheaply in Edinburgh in Donaldson's pirated editions. His evenings Mr Keith gave to society. After twenty years spent at Courts and in the conduct of State affairs, he found the surviving companions of his youth but dull company. He turned for society to the clerical order, as Dr "Jupiter" Carlyle exultantly observes. In his incorrigible light-heartedness the old ambassador offered marriage to one of his daughter's contemporaries; but with a fairness and sense of honour that make one long to know her more intimately, Miss Mally Cheape refused to "break up such good society."

In truth, no man need have asked for better company than that of the three Keith ladies and their old aunt, "the

four Hermits" as Sir Robert called them. Miss Jannie, a patient cripple, deserves to be recorded as one of the original founders of the Edinburgh Home for Incurables; Agnes—St Agnes was her name in the family—has left in the letters of her kinsfolk traces of goodness and dignified sweetness, delicate as the scent of lavender; the youngest, Anne, was a feminine edition of her brother, Sir Robert. She was his correspondent, "the chit-chat companion" who sent him "the sheets of feminine nonsense that sweeten the labours of a plenipo."

In reading the published correspondence of any person of importance, the drawback is that one has not the other half of the correspondence—the free outpourings of the unimportant people. Delightful as are Sir Robert's letters from Dresden and Vienna,—State affairs and Court gossip being made near and human by his wit and sunshiny good humour,—one would relinquish half of them if one might recover in exchange the sheets of "feminine nonsense,"—Miss Anne's account of Mrs Cockburn's supper-parties, descriptions of the gay young Lindsays when she paid her long summer visits to Fife, an account of stately Dr Robertson when he came to beg subscriptions for the new University Buildings (a request to which Sir Robert as an old Collegian cheerfully responded), possibly a picture of Mr James Boswell in the days when he was paying attention to Miss Anne's cousin, the eldest Miss Dick of Prestonfield. How gladly should we welcome a picture of Edinburgh society seen through eyes as shrewd and benevolent as Miss Anne's! Her brother was insatiably fond of gossip and liked it explicit, especially in prognostications of marriage. "Pray avoid mystery, which is nowhere in its place except in Holy Writ. The Princes of the Holy Roman Empire shall know nothing of what passes in Fife." "Sister Anne" piqued herself on being something of a woman of business. Her brother left the

management of his property on Tweedside entirely to her, beyond the general exhortation, "Trees! trees! trees!" She must have had something of her brother's gift of tongues—he spoke all the European languages—for he rallies her on her love of Latin and compliments her on her Italian. She was also a wit and a woman of fashion, loving cards and conversation to the day of her death. In her youth she had danced at Assemblies, making one of the "heartsome set," a finer distinction than making one of the "Beauty set" or the "Peeress' set." (She probably wore on these occasions one of the beautiful brocades that Maria Theresa had had specially woven as a gift for her valued Keith, the elder ambassador.)

Of the lively conversation of "the Hermits" one can judge by Sir Robert's tribute to another lady's social gifts. "I always knew the Duchess of Gordon to be one of the most bewitching creatures alive, and if she struck the Keiths dumb she may brag of it to her dying day." Two generations of diplomacy, however, had given the Keiths as much the habit of discreet silence as Nature had endowed them with the gift of lively speech. In 1772 "the Hermits" had a winter of anxious suspense which they might confide to none. A royal daughter of England, a Queen of Denmark, had been falsely accused, hurried off to prison, and would have met with a violent death had not Colonel Keith, then English Minister at Copenhagen, on his own initiative and in entire uncertainty whether his own Government would back him up, threatened immediate bombardment of the capital if a hair of the princess was injured. Then, in what was practically a state of siege, he spent the three weeks till an answer could come from his own Government. The answer, when it came, was the insignia of the Order of the Bath! Simultaneously there arrived at the Hermitage from the king a gracious message that must have



glorified the loyal old man and his enthusiastic women-kind. Though over eighty years old, Mr Keith only awaited the milder weather to go up to London to thank the king in person for the honour paid to his son.

The Keiths had a devoted attachment to the king's person, such as was lavished on the Stuarts but fell rarely to the lot of the House of Brunswick. "As I hope for mercy," writes Sir Robert in a glow of generous feeling, "'tis a fair heat; the King against the Keiths, Goodness against Gratitude, and a close run thing it will be."

The king scored a point in the race when, the next year, 1773, the Government of Jamaica was bestowed on the sailor brother, now Sir Basil. No one pretended that the sailor Keith had exceptional abilities. His brother believed that his "sweet and beautiful Basil" would succeed by dint of his good, plain sense, his warm heart, and his Keith contempt of money. His brother officers wept at parting from him; Lord Dartmouth, Lord of the Admiralty, "was positively in love with Basil."

The amiable qualities, traditional alike in his family and his profession, could not save the gallant sailor from falling—they probably precipitated him—into an unhappy marriage. The bride, a Bath lady, was credited with all the virtues usually discovered in brides by the hopeful credulity of kinsfolk, but a dozen years later we find her a troublesome and rapacious widow in the uncompromising pages of Mrs Anne's correspondence. Her married life had only lasted four years, during which she made generous Sir Basil very unhappy, and eight years later she was still tormenting his relations about those monetary interests for which they had so much contempt. With the clear severity of the habitually benevolent, Mrs Anne describes her sister-in-law as "a woman who, to recover half-a-crown, would torture your heart out."

Such paltry considerations did not exist for the Keiths. When the old ambassador died in 1774, Sir Robert was eager that "their little pittance should be secured for his sisters, with full power to leave it to whomsoever they would"; but he would not let them use the word "independence" if it meant freeing him from the obligation of contributing to their comfort.

Sir Basil's unhappy experience was the only matrimonial venture in a family, the members of which, as they grew older, had more young people through their hands than if they had been heads of large families. If Sir Robert never saved money during his twenty years as Ambassador at Vienna, it was largely because he entertained all the young Englishmen making the grand tour. "The Johns" as he called them, were "genteel lads" who did him and their country credit, and were therefore welcome to devour his substance at the Embassy. "They are comely fellows," he writes, "have high spirits and good stomachs, and kick the world before them."

Meantime Mrs Anne was playing the same part among her young kinsmen and kinswomen. If any were sick, straightway they were put in charge of "Dr Anne Murray Keith." When young Lord Balcarres, who was expected to make a prosperous marriage, got entangled in a romantic attachment, it was "Mrs Anne Keith's prudent behaviour" that relieved the situation and sent my lord off to propose to his cousin, the heiress.

A maiden lady of some experience is more likely to take a just view of the relation of income to expenditure than her young kinsman who comes into his property at the age of two-and-twenty; but how many have the patience to make a man of affairs the mouthpiece of the advice she is eager to bring home? "My suggesting this" (a certain counsel of prudence), she writes to Sir John Dick, the Mr Greatheart of her young cousins and their mother—"my suggesting this to the young

man would not do, . . . but if the advice came from *you*, they will all set it down to your knowledge of the world and skill in business."

She adds some shrewd reflections on the comparative conditions of the Scottish and English aristocracy. "With moderation our little matters here go far, but a year or two of extravagance is not to be recovered in a lifetime. Perhaps this is the only real difference between Scottish and English fortunes; on a large scale depredations make less havoc. All the rest is pretty equal. *We have hospitality for your elegance*, and so it goes on."

In 1782, with a patness worthy of a story-book, Sir Robert's favourite of all his "Vienna lads," the honourable Philip Yorke, was engaged to Mrs Anne's special darling among her cousins, Lady Elizabeth Lindsay—the child to whose practical suggestion, "Steal the cow, Sister Annie," we owe half a verse of Robin Gray. The youngest of the sisters was no whit behind the other two in charm of person, quickness of wit, and—that special grace of the Lindsays—lightness of heart. But Sir Robert, her guardian, specially commends this bright young creature as "a woman of merit and steady principle." The eighteenth century made no apology for praising virtue in sober seriousness.

It was when Mrs Anne was spending the winter of 1785 with Lady Elizabeth Yorke that Lady Louisa Stuart made her acquaintance. Lady Louisa had romance in her Scottish blood, and the habit, from living alone with her mother, of listening to old stories, and Mrs Anne's tales were welcome to her, though she says that "the town" dismissed them as "prosy." It is pleasanter to think of Mrs Anne telling her tales to appreciative listeners on the terrace at Balcarres, or seated among her young Dick cousins at Prestonfield in the pleasant bay window looking out on Arthur's Seat.

Here is her account of Lady Elizabeth's first return to the home of her childhood:—

“If you could see Lady Elizabeth Yorke romping with the Dicks and the little children, dancing to Lady Balcarres' (her sister-in-law's) harpsichord, playing cards for pence and boxing (?) the girls for them too, you would take her for a girl just escaped from school. Lord Balcarres and Mr Yorke are in the Highlands, so we are nine women here, and not one man among us. Lady Balcarres has gathered all the kinsmen and cronies of Lady Elizabeth. Among the rest, the two eldest of Lady Dick's girls—charming girls, the eldest very pretty, both of delightful tempers, and both lively and possessed of talent and taste. . . . To do them both justice, their modesty is quite unaffected. Their mother was too sensible and too attentive to their real advantage to make accomplishments the first object in their education: they know the useful to such good purpose that they dress themselves with the utmost cleverness and elegance on what would hardly furnish crown - powder to a fine lady.”

Those were days when Romney was making simplicity fashionable, and the nine gay ladies playing and dancing to the harpsichord must have been a charming group.

Mrs Anne was to have all a mother's satisfaction in the settling in life of her two favourites. She was beginning to be anxious lest pretty Bessie—aged twenty-six—was doomed to a life of cheerful single usefulness like her own, when Mr Robert Lindsay, the most prosperous of the Balcarres brothers, returned from the East Indies, as men did in those days, with a competent fortune, and a Lindsay eagerness to shower gifts and annuities on his kinsfolk. By a family arrangement, advantageous to both sides, he bought the old home, Balcarres, from his brother. He had not been long at home before a romance, begun twenty years before in the Prestonfield



nursery (when the lady was under six!), found its proper conclusion, and sweet Bessie Dick was established as mistress of Balcarres.

Mary, the younger sister, became the mistress of an equally romantic home, Yair, in the valley of the Tweed. Her husband, Mr Pringle of Whytbank, was "the long-descended neighbour" of Walter Scott's Ashestiel days. It is of her boys that he writes in the Second Epistle in "Marmion" with beautiful geniality—

"And much I miss those sportive boys,  
Companions of my mountain joys,  
Just at the age 'twixt boy and youth  
When thought is speech and speech is truth."

The placing out in life of charming daughters Mother Nature keeps pretty well in her own hands, but leaves it to human parents to find openings for their sons. Mrs Anne took her share in helping to start the Dick boys, making a gift of his indenture fee to the young lawyer, and accompanying his mother to interview the omnipotent Mr Dundas to obtain an East India Company's writership for a second. She gives a humorous account of the diplomatic little visit. ". . . Lady Dick has too much sagacity to urge her point. She stopped, and I gave him a sincere dose of thanks on my brother's, Sir Robert's, account. You never saw a neater little visit. . . . In less than half an hour he had packed us up in our *remise* most gallantly, and I am sure he thinks us a couple of as reasonable a pair of tabbies as ever he met with during his political life."

When in 1794 Mrs Anne Murray Keith settled down in George Square with her "chum," old Lady Balcarres, all her children were handsomely off her hands, and at the age of sixty she might justifiably look forward to a life of irresponsible ease. But in her case was to be fulfilled a word of the Scriptures which, if originally used symbolically, is literally true of many single women—

"More are the children of the desolate than of the married wife, saith the Lord."

It was not in any of the Keiths to disallow the largest claims of friendship. It had been Sir Robert's boast that "more than one honest man has made me the honourable offer of leaving all his children to my care, and, hang me like a dog, if I don't accept of such legacies with a tender gratitude and the sincerest intention of acting up to the duties which they may bring with them."

He could calculate securely on the same sentiments in Anne, his only surviving sister. After his retirement in 1790 he and she had quietly relinquished the idea of living together. Edinburgh was too provincial for him, and she was too—*national* she would have called it, not *provincial*, "in her preferences" for London. When in 1795 he was suddenly cut off by apoplexy, it was probably a surprise to her that there was a daughter, a little girl of eight years old. It was a sorry exchange for Anne, in place of witty, warm-hearted Sir Robert, a shrinking little girl; in lieu of the friendship of a lifetime and the support of his experience and knowledge of the world, the claim of a young and unprotected life. But it appears that she accepted the legacy with "tender gratitude." The old King George III. had kept up intimate interest in the Keith family. When he heard that the child was to be cared for by Mrs Murray Keith he remarked, "Well, it will be fortunate for the child. She is a very sensible woman."

There is a novel called 'Probation,' now long forgotten, written by this little ward after she was grown to be a woman. The dignified old lady with the white hair, of cordial approach and benevolent aspect, living among her books—solid English authors ranging with French memoirs and belles-lettres,—is Anne Keith as she appeared to the affectionate veneration of a younger genera-

tion. She is a different Anne Keith from the cheerful correspondent and devoted kinswoman we have known.

But there is a third Anne Keith who has stepped into the pages of romance, and, without parting from her charming individuality, has gained immortality under the name of Mrs Bethune Baliol.

In 1818 Scott had written of his venerable friend: "Much tradition, and that of the very best, has died with this excellent old lady; one of the few persons whose spirits and cheerfulness and freshness of mind and body made old age lovely and desirable."

In the winter of 1827, when he was at the darkest hour of his night, he gave himself, as a rest from the drudgery of Napoleon, the relief of writing 'The Chronicles of the Canongate.' He was too tired to invent, and went for his materials to memory. For this reason there is more intimate autobiographical material in the delightful sketch in the Introduction than in any of the novels except 'Redgauntlet.' He himself avows that the finely limned portrait of Mrs Bethune Baliol was drawn from his old friend Mrs Murray Keith.

The description of the old family Hôtel of the Baliols, still enclosed in its own gardens though lying in the Canongate, is *possibly* a reminiscence of the house where, in Scott's youth, Dugald Stewart had listened to rooks cawing in trees that hid the Calton rock from his windows, but Mrs Bethune Baliol's characteristic treasures were certainly possessions of Anne Keith,—the family pictures, the bronzes and Italian and Flemish pictures brought from abroad, the "spontoon which her elder brother bore when he was leading a company of the Black Watch at Fontenoy," the rings and jewels about each of which she had some story to tell. Mrs Bethune Baliol, like her prototype, had always one or more young relatives under her protection. Other traits—"the *chère exquise*, agreeably varied by some old

French or Scottish *plat*”—with which she entertained her friends, the quaint propriety of retaining a waiting-woman in her boudoir when, at the age of eighty, she entertained a male visitor, the high spirit that enjoyed paying taxes “to king and country,” the hospitality which ordered a glass of wine for the astonished tax-gatherer: these, one feels, were characteristics drawn from life.

Convincing, too, is this description of her personal appearance: “A little woman with ordinary features and an ordinary form. . . . We may believe Mrs Bethune Baliol when she said of herself that she was never remarkable for personal charms,—a modest admission which was readily confirmed by certain old ladies, who, whatever might have been the youthful advantages which they more than hinted had been formerly their own share, were now, in personal appearance as well as in everything else, far inferior to my accomplished friend. . . . The irregularity of her features was now of little consequence, animated as they were by the vivacity of her conversation; her teeth were excellent, her eyes though inclining to grey were lively, laughing, and undimmed by time. A slight shade of complexion, more brilliant than her years promised, subjected my friend among strangers to the calumny of having stretched her foreign habits as far as a prudent touch of rouge. But it was a calumny, for when telling or listening to an interesting or affecting story, I have seen her colour come and go as if it played on the cheek of eighteen.”

While strength lasted the two old ladies, Lady Balcarres and “her dearest husband, Anne Keith,” kept their state, saw their friends, played their rubbers in their flat in George Square. When age was no longer to be resisted, the old home at Balcarres—its master Lady Bal’s most dutiful son, its mistress Mrs Anne’s favourite young lady—made a harbour of refuge for



the two old heads. Sitting out in the sun in the garden, or at the fireside in the winter, the two old ladies talked of long past days, in perfect harmony, though the one held past and present clearly distinguished in a mind of undiminished vigour, while to the other all times had merged into one happy, hopeful now. Anne was the first to go, dying in 1818 at the age of eighty-two. The failing memory of the older lady never lost hold of the fact of her death, but she refused to grieve over it, saying that she had only gone on before her a little bit.

“She loved to be told of Mrs Anne Keith’s last moments, her fortitude and resignation, saying ‘it was a bonny story and very edifying,’ but she would not allow that she is to be grieved for, or any other true Christian who escapes beautifully and easily from this world.”



## II.

### PARLIAMENT HOUSE FRIENDS

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GEORGE CRANSTOUN (LORD COREHOUSE)

THOMAS THOMSON (DEPUTY-CLERK REGISTRAR)

WILLIAM ERSKINE (LORD KINNEDDER)

JANE ANNE CRANSTOUN (COUNTESS PURGSTALL)



## GEORGE CRANSTOUN

(LORD COREHOUSE).

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THE first twelve years of Scott's life fall within those years of growth and increasing prosperity which Creech describes so quaintly in the parallel paragraphs of his history of Edinburgh.

By the time Scott was grown up the exodus towards the New Town was almost complete. Princes Street and George Street were at first long lines of dwelling-houses, too low and modest for the noble width of the street. Charlotte Square was indeed rising in classical symmetry, and the Adam Brothers had built a row of admirable houses on the slope commanding the view of the Forth, but the garden that lies now in front of Heriot Row was then but a rough slope where family washings were spread on the green. Not all at once could those who had ventured across the North Bridge resolve on the extravagance of a house with a main door. In the cross streets—Frederick and Hanover and Castle—houses were let in flats.

The valley that lay between the old town and the new fitly symbolised the gulf between the society that had huddled in neighbourly squalor in the old courts and wynds and the generation that enjoyed unromantic comfort in the new streets. There was less eccentricity, less originality, less ceremony, less drinking; still, even in its new surroundings, Edinburgh society kept much

of its humorous and kindly individuality, while increased prosperity quickened ambition and high spirit in the younger generation.

A stranger in the land, Lady Elliot, later Lady Minto, a keen observer and a woman of sound judgment, has recorded the impression made on her by the society of Edinburgh in the later nineties. "This country has arrived at the true pitch of comfort and happiness. . . . People meet together to be pleased and cheerful and easy. Even Scotch pride has its uses by putting the poor often on an equal footing with the rich. A Douglas or a Scott would consider themselves on a par with persons of the highest title and rank; their education is equally good, their society the same, their spirit and love of their country often much greater. . . . Nothing is so uncommon as to see idle men and listless manners." This testimony is the more valuable as contrasted with Lady Elliot's plain speaking on the dissipation and insipidity of the London society of her day.

The real wealth, the buried treasure, in any society lies in its small groups of young men unknown to the world, well known to one another, who together re-discover beauty in forgotten forms and worship it, or hail some original genius and acclaim him: men young enough to vapour and argue and declaim, and to believe fitfully in themselves and heartily in one another!

In 1796 the intellectual centre of Edinburgh society was the home—an old belated country-house with trees and a rookery, albeit in the precincts of the Canongate—where Dugald Stewart received distinguished guests, and his kind, romantic wife was mother and inspiration to the scions of English Whig houses who boarded with them. The talk was probably excellent, the hospitality graceful and sincere at those evening parties where the guests sat in the firelight because the philosopher found that pleasant twilight restful to the brain and favour-

able to talk. But the wit, one cannot help thinking, was brighter, the laughter more infectious, the poetry older, the criticism newer at the little supper-parties in the modest flat in Frederick Street where Mrs Stewart's sister, Miss Jane Anne Cranstoun, kept house for her brother George, and entertained that select company of young advocates, self-named "the brotherhood of the Mountain." Lord Dudley wrote once to Mrs Stewart: "It is true that many of your countrymen have said to me, 'The Cranstouns are the cleverest but the oddest people in the world.'" If to be romantic and buoyant, eloquent in speech, faithful in friendship, full of wit and sensibility, constitutes "oddness," both sisters must plead guilty at once. But by no straining of meaning can the word be twisted to fit the modesty, capacity, and gentle elevation of George Cranstoun's character. In every generation the Law levies a heavy tax on the finest intellects of the country. Men who might have left permanent contributions to thought and literature, give the labour of a lifetime to swell the great, anonymous, unwritten volume of the Law. In the days when briefs were coming in slowly alike to Erskine and to Cranstoun, literature had powerful attractions for both. Both were in Scott's confidence, his faith in their critical judgment was only too implicit. One afternoon in 1802 at Lasswade he read aloud a new poem to his two critics. The measure—"a sort of light-horseman stanza"—struck so strangely on ears still attuned to the eighteenth century heroic couplet, the fine abruptness of the beginning—"The feast was over at Branksome Tower"—so startled their imagination, that their judgment was at fault, and so little did they say, that after their departure Scott ruefully recognised failure, and threw the MS. on the fire. Meanwhile his two friends walking back to Edinburgh confirmed one another in the conviction that the poem was as beautiful as it was strange and new.

When next one of them—probably Erskine—saw Scott,

he expressed such interest in the poem as encouraged the author to proceed.

In the old Frederick Street days the "brothers of the Mountain" were one as poor as the other. George Cranstoun, for all his gentle birth and wide connections, had his own way to make in the world as much as Thomas Thomson, the son of the minister at Dailly. Within the brotherhood Thomson and Cranstoun paired off much as Scott and Erskine did also. A quarter of a century later, when both were successful and distinguished men, Cranstoun wrote to Thomson recalling a visit he had paid him at Dailly when both were ambitious boys.

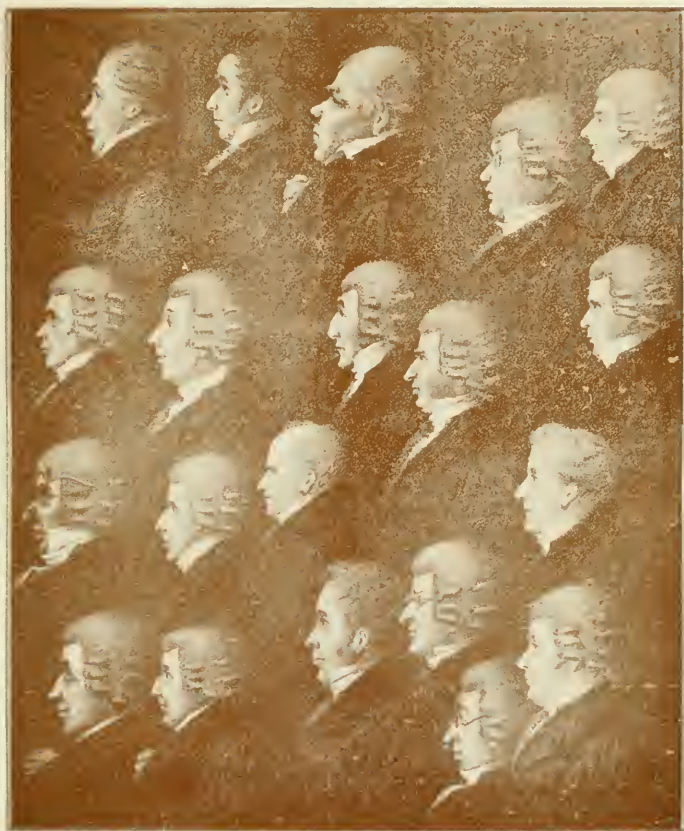
*"September, 1832.*

"MY DEAR THOMSON,—We have been separated almost entirely for some years. Come to me and recall the feelings of days that are past. I was at Dailly church on Sunday, and walked up to the manse. I cannot describe my sensations. On Monday I passed the bowling-green at Bargany and repeated 'Odi profanum,' which we got by heart there. Some days of leisure and quiet will be of use to you and make me sincerely happy."

Devotion to his profession and a naturally retiring disposition had withdrawn Cranstoun from closer intimacy with Scott.

In 1819 Lockhart, a critical young Oxonian, was making his first essay in literature in a series of pictures of Edinburgh Society called 'Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk.' Always encouraging to young men of letters, Scott wrote to commend his sketches of the three most prominent pleaders at the Bar—Jeffrey, John Clerk, Cranstoun. "For all of them, however differing on points whereon I wish we had agreed," he writes, "I entertain not only deep respect but sincere friendship and regard."





PARLIAMENT HOUSE GROUP.

JOHN HOPE. JEFFREY. SIR WALTER SCOTT. P. ROBERTSON. DUNDAS.  
 MONCRIEFF. J. SHANK MORE. ANDREW SKENE. R. JAMIESON. R. WHIGHAM.  
 LORD ELGIN. COCKBURN. FULLERTON. ALISON.  
 R. FORSYTH. CRANSTOUN. THOMSON. G. J. BELL. J. A. MURRAY. LORD GILLIES.



About Cranstoun he adds the remark that in their young days, "he was the more likely of the two to have risen by literature, and he made more than one imperfect attempt. His extreme diffidence, the narrowness of the family circumstances, and a proud shyness which recoiled from the idea of a direct appeal to the public, . . . have been the obstacles. For a poet he *is, intus et in cute.*"

Writing to Cranstoun's sister, Countess Purgstall, in 1820, Scott says rather sadly: "The slow and gradual progress of life's long voyage has severed all the gallant fellowships whom you left spreading their sails in the morning breeze."

But it is with early friendships as with Aladdin's Lamp: let them lie bye till they seem dull and rusty, yet a touch of the finger will restore the magic.

In 1827 Scott, snatching a holiday from his labours and his business perplexities, spent a day with Cranstoun at his beautiful place, Corehouse, on the Falls of Clyde. They had shared many a literary enthusiasm in their youth; now as elderly men they were drawn together by the distinctive passion of later life, love for the cultivation of the earth. "This is a superb place. . . . Cranstoun has as much feeling about improvement as about other things," writes Scott. The visit to Corehouse had followed a day spent with another dear friend, Mrs Maclean Clephane. Cranstoun divides with her the valediction on this pleasant break in a rather gloomy time: "Thus ends a pleasant expedition among the people I like most."

## THOMAS THOMSON

(DEPUTY-CLERK REGISTRAR).

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MISS JANE ANNE CRANSTOUN, in the days when she was at once her brother George's secretary and housekeeper, had, like other women, to bear with male strictures on household details. "Mrs Thomson has spoilt George sadly," she writes to Thomas Thomson after a visit her brother had paid to his friend's home, the Manse of Dailly; "he cannot get a shirt washed so that he is able to wear it, nor anything done as it was done at Dailly."

The good house-mother at the manse had indeed her hands full of shirts, as witness this letter to her three sons, duly delivered with the parcel brought by the Dailly carrier in 1795: "Six ruffled for Thomas; six for Adam—viz., five plain and one ruffled; Johnnie will get some when he comes home." The order of favouritism is so like the beginning of a fairy tale or a parable, that one is not surprised to learn that it is shirtless Johnnie who has left imperishable work behind him, while well-doing Adam is forgotten, and learned Thomas is only known to experts as the greatest Scottish antiquarian lawyer.

At the time the shirts were sewn and ruffled and despatched the three brothers were in lodgings in Bristo Street. Thomas, after a distinguished career at college, had been called to the Bar, but for some years

longer was constrained to draw reluctantly on his father's meagre stipend of £105 a-year; Adam was a clerk in Sir William Forbes' house of business; as for John, the artistic temperament in those days was unconscious of its claims, and the first great Scottish landscape painter whom we know and honour as Thomson of Duddingston was glad to enter the Church to provide his mother and sister with a home.

Bristo Street is round the corner from George Square, and on Sunday mornings Walter Scott frequently escaped from the Sabbatarianism of his own home to have breakfast with the three manse lads in their lodgings.

Thomson was already deep in the study of old Scottish laws, tenures, and customs, lore for which Scott had always an appetite; he was also one of the set of friends who studied German together.

From the days of the breakfasts in Bristo Street till far on in the nineteenth century, at all the social meetings where one would most have wished to be present, one would have been sure to meet "a stour grey carle," tall and gaunt, with cavernous eyes, long upper lip, and sagacious nose. On nearer acquaintance he would have proved to be a man of profound learning of a special kind; ready to impart it, too, to such as were able to elicit it; courteous evidently, but so little of a talker that, though one meets his name on countless occasions, no comment is attached, no syllable of his talk is quoted.

He was one of Miss Cranstoun's inner circle, the closest friend of her brother George; he was so intimate with Dugald Stewart that, by special request, he brooded over the philosopher's epitaph for years and then died without producing it. He was in the confidence and daily intimacy of the men who started the 'Edinburgh Review,' and might have shared the fun and excitement of that audacious enterprise had not his fastidious taste



made reviewing irksome to him, while his procrastinating habits make him the despair of editors. In 1810 Lady Minto and her family spent a winter in Edinburgh, and gathered round them all the brightest wits of the Whig party. Scott's lively "Blue-stocking friend, Lady Anna Maria Elliot," wrote to Lord Minto a pleasant account of what she called their "Brown Toast Club." The members were, among others, Jeffrey, of whom the lady writes that he was "really good-natured, though it seems a paradox to say so"; Harry Cockburn, "as full of sense and fun as an egg is full of meat"; Lord Webb Seymour, "gentle and wise"; and finally, Thomas Thomson, "the oldest, gravest, and most learned of them all."

No wonder that the noble old lord, rather wearied of official life at Calcutta, looked forward wistfully to joining so good a company. "I shall be delighted to be admitted to your thé; so, Molly, put the kettle on, and I'll be with you in a trice."

Thomson was first a member and, after Sir Walter's death, President of that high-spirited Bannatyne Club which presented Scotland with so much of her own history in noble quartos. Delightful occasions these were to discuss the projects of the Club, either in "poor old 39" Castle Street or in Thomson's snug study in Charlotte Square, when

"The friends of old books and old wine  
United in praises of sage Bannatyne,  
Who left such a treasure of old Scottish lore  
As enabled each age to print one volume more."

Thomas Thomson was himself editor of many of these volumes, but the student who eagerly takes down 'Leslie's History of Scotland' or the 'Papers concerning the Master of Gray' will experience a shock of disappointment at the absence of illuminating preface and footnotes such as Thomson, from the copious and curious stores

of his knowledge, could so admirably have supplied. The very copiousness of his material made the necessity of selection and arrangement irksome to a mind at once laborious and indolent. In conversation these same stores poured forth generously, and made Thomson's conversation as rich as it was authoritative on all antiquarian matters.

The Blair-Adam Club was a delightful open-air supplement to the Bannatyne Club. Most of the members of the one belonged also to the other, but instead of "ransacking old Banny" they explored the antiquities of the ancient Kingdom of Fife. Of this Club both Thomas and his brother John were members.

Of all Scott's friends Thomson perhaps best deserves the expressive name of "crony." They dined constantly together, Scott inviting his old friend with the endearing locution he also used to Lockhart: "I pray you of all loves to dine with me to-morrow at half-past five." At the first dinner Scott gave after that fatal 17th of January 1826, Thomson was one of the guests. Thomson and William Clerk dined often with him when he was too sad or harassed to enjoy other company. Old stories of the old Parliament House days, curious bits of history or facts in old law, could always distract his troubled thoughts. Thus they held together from first to last, the old party that had been young and merry in Frederick Street. Thomson was in the same carriage as Scott on that sad drive down to Queensferry at the funeral of their old friend, Willie Erskine. Scott himself had been in his grave two years when George Cranstoun, the only other survivor of that gay circle, wrote to Thomson: "When you come, as I trust you will, I will tell you all I felt on my first visit to Dryburgh since you and I were there together, I think in 1797. Heavens! what events have happened since that time, and how many of our friends and intimate acquaintances repose within its walls."

Such was Thomas Thomson as he appeared in the society of Edinburgh and among his friends when he emerged for an hour or two out of his own proper elements, the dust and parchments of the Register House.

Scottish patriotism, if we are to believe our English neighbours, has always been indifferent to truth and hostile to inquiry. "*Droves* of them," said Dr Johnson in his ringing tones, "would come up and attest anything for the honour of Scotland." And Ritson follows with splenetic snarl, "Scotsmen prefer anything to truth when the latter is at all injurious to the national honour, nor are they very solicitous about it on any occasion."

The prejudices, the mendacities, the fables repeated uncritically from Boece to Pinkerton,—all that historical lumber has been swept away by the labours of Thomas Thomson, who left "in the body of Records published, the foundations of history not only correct beyond all former example, but free from all suspicion of one-sidedness."

In 1806 Thomson gave up a practice at the Bar, already beginning to be lucrative, to become Deputy-Clerk Registrar. Of the practical side of Thomson's work, the Reform of Scottish Registration and Conveyancing, and the tact, firmness, and success with which this was carried out, only an expert could speak to any purpose. It was, however, the historical and antiquarian part of the work that engrossed the heart and brain of Thomson.

As Deputy-Clerk Registrar, Thomson had the same Commission that three hundred and fifty years previously had been given to a Royal Commission in Queen Mary's reign—"to visie, sicht, and correct the Laws of this our realm made by us and our most noble progenitors." Many of the actual papers were the same, only now so old and brittle that it was part of the Deputy-Clerk Registrar's duty to have them inlaid in stout paper. No detail of the work was too minute for Thomson's care. He had to train from the beginning a set of skilled palæo-



graphers; he had to decipher, compare, and collate MSS., and to collect from foreign libraries such papers as touched on Scottish affairs. Then painfully, sagaciously, and with endless reconsideration and correction, his views and convictions would emerge distinctly, the shrewd judgment dealing clearly with the mass of detail.

In the early years of his appointment the Commissioners to whom he was responsible—Lord Frederick Campbell, Lord Glenbervie, and others—were personal friends, men who recognised Thomson's singular aptitude for his task, and contentedly left him to invent his own methods of working. In those ante-Reform days the business spirit had not invaded Government offices, and no obtrusive, democratic criticism made "public functionaries uneasy."

In Thomson's comprehensive plan of work the earliest Records, being those that required most elucidation, were to form the first volume along with so much prefatory matter that it would have been practically a Constitutional History of Scotland as well as a minute description of each document and its history. As early as 1806 we find him apologising for its delayed appearance, and speaking hopefully of the term for its accomplishment in months.

Thirty-three years later, in 1839, when it was summarily demanded by a new Commission appointed by the Government of the day, it was not forthcoming! Much work had indeed been done, Records had been printed and indexed, side issues had been followed up, and had produced valuable publications. For that unlucky first volume Thomson had all the necessary matter in his capacious brain, but he had got into a fatal habit of accumulating knowledge, while an evil spell seemed to paralyse his powers of putting it into form and bringing his work to the birth.

The same fatal incapacity for facing up to an issue and taking decided action brought hopeless disorder into Thomson's personal economies. In 1827 he had suc-

ceeded Colin Mackenzie<sup>1</sup> as Clerk of Session, and the income derived from the two offices amounted to fifteen hundred a-year. It was wealth for a man whose only extravagances were books and kindness to his kinsfolk. But a debt incurred some years previously for a relation had burdened his finances, and rather than make the effort of going into his affairs he left the debt unpaid, and suffered the interest to run on from year to year.

Except the creation of fiction, there is no occupation that so completely excludes the obstinate facts and troublesome cares of life as minute research in some field of discovery. Seated in his leather chair in the Register House, magnifying glass in hand, a volume of books of reference within reach of his arm, and an old document on his desk, Thomson forgot the importunate first volume, the unfavourable balance-sheet.

One might hope, in defiance of experience, that a life so laborious, modest, and friendly might yet have ended in honour and tranquil satisfaction; but Nemesis, which seems to leave our more sinister faults to the slow revenges of time and conscience, is swift and relentless to exact the uttermost penalty from procrastination and slack habits of business. The summons from the new and energetic Commission, startling the old man with peremptory demand for the first volume, was speedily followed by an inquiry into the financial position of the office, an inquiry which unfortunately revealed confusion of accounts and a considerable deficit. Investigation could find nothing against Thomson's personal honour—as often as not he had defrayed special undertakings from his own pocket,—but he had kept no accounts, he had constantly undertaken or continued work he considered useful with no reference to the authority of the Commission, and these enterprises were now distinctly repudiated. He was dismissed from his office—the office he had practically created.

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, p. 271.

He was a man of seventy-one: for three-and-thirty years he had lived for his vocation, he had been honoured by all for his learning, and loved by many for his singleness of heart. Yet such was the nature of the case, he could neither call out on injustice nor accept of sympathy. He never entered the Register House again, and though he kept up a cordial friendship with his young successor there, Mr Cosmo Innes, he never opened his lips on the subject of his favourite studies. He laboured on at the Clerks of Session table, handing over most of his salary to his creditors. He bore himself stoically to the world and kindly to his inner circle of home and friends, but his heart, with his pride, was broken.

## WILLIAM ERSKINE

(LORD KINNEDDER).

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IF the Cranstouns themselves were poor, and Thomas Thomson, a typical son of the manse, poorer, poorest of all was William Erskine. This young advocate was as gently born as Cranstoun, though more obscurely. Like Thomas Thomson he was a minister's son, though with a widely differing household tradition, for his father was a non-juring minister of the repressed Episcopal Church of Scotland.

For fifty years the father had been minister at Muthil, in Perthshire, and a close neighbour of the Lairds of Gask, of all Jacobite lairds the most single-minded, gallant, and obstinate in their loyalty. The clergyman who had ministered to the elder laird, who christened the children of the younger one, and, in the absence of a regular chaplain, held services in their chapel, must have satisfied the purest standard of Jacobite loyalty, for the laird did not hesitate to break with his successor when, on the death of Prince Charles Edward, he consented to pray for the reigning family. Mr Erskine and the men of his school inserted the right names in the petitions of the Litany, and added the touching petition for *all exiles*.

Living a little aloof from ordinary neighbours, separated from them in the great interests of religion and politics, hearing much regretful talk of a lost cause, the par-

sonage children would be apt to grow up sensitive, reserved, and critical,—characteristics that clung to Erskine all his days. Young companionship they had, and that of the best wits and highest spirits in the country, for the Erskine children were companions and playfellows of the young Oliphants of Gask. Mary Anne Erskine was through life the intimate friend of Caroline Oliphant, afterwards Lady Nairne. She had shared merry times in the “Auld Hoose” in days when “pretty Miss Car” sat at her harpsichord or wrote joyous invitations to the County Ball. The friendship lasted through the stress and strain of later life, and tradition has it that Lady Nairne’s sweetest song, “The Land o’ the Leal,” was written to soothe her friend’s grief at the death of a child.

William was three years younger than his sister and her friend, but country hospitalities generally include whole households, and he must on more than one occasion have seen the Laird look significantly at his younger son when he gave the first toast after dinner: “The King, Charles!”

The Gask stories of the ’45, the character of the elder laird, his romantic loyalty, his patience under adversity, would all be fireside talk at the Muthil parsonage. These were tales of “sixty years since” that would powerfully appeal to Walter Scott. No seed died that fell into that fertile soil. It was largely from Erskine’s account of old Gask that Scott drew his Baron Bradwardine, though Scott’s other friends, the Forbeses, had surely the right to claim certain traits for their kinsman, Lord Pitsligo; and some of the facts were derived from the experiences of old Stewart of Invernahyle, the kind old friend of Scott’s boyhood.

The cares of life were bound to fall early and heavily on the son of a non-juring minister supported by forfeited lairds. When, in 1782, old Mr Erskine died, Willie, a promising boy of fourteen, held a bursary at



Glasgow College. Of his life among his fellow-students we know nothing. One can imagine that the gently nurtured lad would shrink sensitively from those humours of that fierce democracy, a Scottish university, which only roused pleasurable combativeness in Leyden. Small and slender, with bright brown eyes and hectic cheek, William Erskine had eager ambition and enthusiasm for literature combined with the emotional temperament of a woman. Fortunately a fine critical judgment saved him from the common error of mistaking ambition and enthusiasm for genius, while his sympathetic temperament fitted him for a part given only to those of rarest quality,—“the friend of the bridegroom, who rejoiceth because of the bridegroom’s voice.”

Of the good things a university can offer—sound learning, great teachers, young companionship—the best is surely discipleship. This, however, Erskine was to obtain neither from friendly professors nor gifted fellow-students, but from the obscure Episcopalian minister with whom, in Scottish fashion, he boarded. Mr Macdonald was an enthusiastic student of earlier English literature, especially of the Elizabethan drama, and in that unusual school—unusual, at least, at the end of the eighteenth century—Erskine developed and refined his natural taste. Macdonald’s own fate was a salutary warning to his disciple’s ambition. He had felt the fatal attraction of literature,—of literature, too, in the form in which failure is easiest. The difficulty of at once inventing a simple, powerful, symmetrical story and turning it into a fine drama has been instinctively recognised by the great dramatists, who have met it by adopting current, often well-known, tales. Alas! for the second-rate talents that lack prescience of the impossible. Macdonald’s romantic play, “*Vimonda*,”—now long forgotten,—failed to take the town even when Kemble good-naturedly gave it a trial. Macdonald’s own fate was that of Chatterton. Erskine was



at first destined for the English Bar. When he was eating his dinners at Lincoln's Inn he may have come across his unfortunate master in the successive stages of that fight between ambition and despair so painfully described in Crabbe's 'Tales of the Hall.'<sup>1</sup>

It was a kind fate that recalled Erskine to practise at the Scottish Bar, and gave him Walter Scott, the sanest man of genius that ever stepped, to be the romance of his life.

In the early days Erskine, like Cranstoun, set up house with his sister as housekeeper. Like Miss Cranstoun, Mary Anne Erskine took a warm interest in Walter Scott's hopeless love-affair,—at least, so one gathers from cryptic allusions in the frank sisterly letter she wrote to him on the eve of her own marriage with Mr Campbell Colquhoun. The one good office one would have expected her to perform in later life, the introduction of the one woman of genius in Scotland to the greatest man of genius, was prevented by Lady Nairne's own prejudices. By the time she had settled in Edinburgh Lady Nairne had come under those Evangelical influences that Sir Walter particularly deprecated in "our Scotch ladies of quality," and disapproved too strongly of Sir Walter's treatment of the Covenanters to desire his acquaintance. Such Puritanic scruples were a poor exchange for the Jacobite prejudices in which she had been brought up.

There is a diverting little story told in Cockburn's *Journal* of the three young advocates—Erskine, Cranstoun, and Scott,—typical of the time rather than characteristic of the men. On some piece of legal business the three found themselves the guests of an old session-clerk at Selkirk, an eccentric old toper who measured a man's success by the strength of his head. After supper the old sinner set himself to essay the comparative qualities of the young men. Cranstoun, with characteristic good sense, gave up the contest early and retired to bed.

<sup>1</sup> Book III., "Boys at School."

Erskine, "always ambitious," struggled on till he was overcome. Scott won his host's unfeigned admiration by fairly sitting him out. Next morning he declared his conviction that Walter Scott would go farther and faster than his companions,—a true prophecy from insufficient premisses!

Cranstoun, Rae—the "dear-loved Rae" of the epistle to Skene,—Campbell Colquhoun his own brother-in-law, soon outstripped Erskine at the Bar, and in some measure this lack of success put him out of suits with the world; but no shadow of envy, nor even of self-depreciatory comparison, came between him and the main interests of his life,—Scott and Scott's works and Scott's fame. According to Lockhart, the chief aim of Erskine's reading, in later years, was to find material and references for Scott.

Scott was curiously devoid of critical instinct. With regard to other people's work, kindness shook the balance; in his own case, seeing that no conceit dulled perception, his dubiety is more curious. When in the dark days of 1827, in a sudden flash of the old spirit he had written the verses of "Bonnie Dundee," they brought no swift conviction of superlative excellence to their author. "I wonder if they are good," he writes in the *Journal*. "Ah! poor Will Erskine, thou couldst and wouldst have told me."

Will Erskine could make mistakes like other critics. Both he and Cranstoun had discouraged Scott by their lukewarm praise when he read them the first canto of the "Lay." It is probable that Erskine was the friend whose lack of interest caused 'Waverley' to be laid aside for years.

It is easy to see, too, in the Epistle to Erskine in "Marmion," that the Counsellor, in his eagerness for Scott's fame, in his longing for literary beauties that transcended his own powers of creation, often urged Scott to tasks alien to his genius. If he was at times too

insistent in exhortation, Scott "would escape from the good advice under the fire of a silly pun," and the Counsellor, half-vexed, half-humorous, would rejoin: "Answer not to me with a fool-born jest,"—a phrase Scott recalled with a sigh when the voice that had used it had long been still.

The Scottish Bar, if she must disappoint many of her sons of the dignity of the Bench, has other gifts to bestow not less agreeable to the wiser mind. The posts of Sheriff and Sheriff-Substitute scatter competent Alan Fairfords and lively Darsie Latimers through the islands and glens of the whole romantic country. Erskine was appointed Sheriff of Shetland and Orkney, and it was in that capacity that he accompanied Scott on the tour through the Islands in 1814. There was a tact and sympathy about Erskine that one can only describe as "wifely." "I often," he writes, "on coming up from the cabin at night, found Scott pacing the deck rapidly, muttering to himself—and went to the fore-castle lest my presence should disturb him. I remember that at Loch Corriskein, in particular, he seemed quite overwhelmed with his feelings; and we all saw it, and, retiring unnoticed, left him to roam and gaze about by himself." Scott has a little counter-tale about Erskine's emotion on first entering the cave of Staffa. "Would you believe it?" he said—"my poor Willie sat down and wept like a child!"

Erskine had married Euphemia Robison, the daughter of the Professor of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh, and, like himself, descended from an honourable line of Episcopalian ministers. In 1817 she died, leaving him with six children. If henceforth "he only endured the mirth to which he had formerly contributed," it was equally true, as Lockhart finely observes, "that one great grief had cast its shadow over him, and . . . he had no longer any thoughts for the paltry misuse of mankind."

In 1820 he was raised to the Bench under the title of Lord Kinnedder, and if the promotion came too late to afford him all he had once expected, it was a satisfaction to him for the sake of his children and friends.

The rest is too sad a tale to tell. A wanton slander that, in Scott's strong phrase, "would have done honour to the invention of the devil," had power to torture to death one of the most sensitive of God's creatures. In Scott's society, and with Scott's brotherly spirit to uphold him, Erskine had tried to bear up as an innocent man ought to do, but his health failed under the strain, and like a creature with a mortal wound he crept home to suffer and to die. On the last day he woke from sleep and ordered his window to be opened, "that he might see the sun once more."

"Then at the touch of wrong without a strife  
Slipped in a moment out of life."

Scott was at this time occupied day and night with preparations for the weary, pompous pageant of the King's visit to Holyrood, but he found time to slip off daily to watch the sick-bed or to comfort the bereaved children. Lockhart never saw him so dejected as when he, with Thomas Thomson, that other old friend, followed Lord Kinnedder's funeral to Queensferry. "If ever a pure spirit quitted this vale of tears," Scott writes to Morritt, "it was William Erskine."

And if ever a strong spirit played Mr Greatheart to the weak and helpless, it was Walter Scott. The next sentence runs: "I must turn to and see what can be done about getting some pension for his daughters."

## JANE ANNE CRANSTOUN

(COUNTESS PURGSTALL).

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THE two sisters, Mrs Dugald Stewart and Miss Jane Anne Cranstoun, may be said to have shared between them the devotion of all the distinguished young men in Edinburgh in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

If Mrs Dugald Stewart was, on the showing of that most captious of critics, Lord Dudley, "the lady with wit and knowledge enough to set up three foreign ladies as first-rate talkers," Miss Cranstoun was "the solace of her brother George's life, and the soul and delight of the little circle" of ambitious young advocates to whom she was a bright, benignant, imperious elder sister. If Mrs Stewart laid her hand graciously on Thomas Campbell's curly head and prophesied of laurel wreaths when the young poet read "Lochiel's Warning" from the MS., did not Walter Scott summon Miss Cranstoun from her bed at six in the morning to listen to his translation of Bürger's "Lenore"?

The admirers of the one sister were not necessarily attracted by the other. Walter Scott infuriated Lord Dudley by dismissing Mrs Stewart—"the immeasurable Ivy"—as "a nice little woman"; and it is difficult to imagine Miss Cranstoun's plain speaking as soothing the sensitive soul of Thomas Campbell.

Of all her brother's friends, Walter Scott was Miss Cranstoun's favourite. They met, he tells us, daily.



Their friendship was twisted with a double cord: she was the first to suspect his genius, and her sympathy divined the secret of his long devotion to gentle Miss Stewart Belches of Fettercairn.

When she was quite an old lady, Miss Cranstoun, then Countess Purgstall, told the story of the translation to Captain Basil Hall. Walter Scott had not been present when Mrs Barbauld, of all people, had produced Spencer's translation of Bürger's "Lenore" at a party at the Dugald Stewarts', but Miss Cranstoun's animated report laid such hold on Scott that he never rested till he had, with much trouble, obtained a copy of the German poem. One night after supper he began to translate the ballad; it was daybreak before it was completed, and such was Scott's excitement that he could not rest without showing it to some one.

At six o'clock that morning Miss Cranstoun's maid roused her, saying that Mr Scott was in the dining-room and wished to see her at once. She hurried down, anxiously wondering what could be the cause of so untimely a visit. At the door he met her, holding out his MS., and eagerly begged her to listen to his poem. As she listened to the fine spirited verses an idea flashed into the mind of the romantic and sympathetic woman. She knew that Scott was on the eve of setting out for a visit in the country where he hoped to meet the lady of his dreams. She begged him to leave the MS. with her, and, when he was gone, set about carrying out her kindly scheme. Erskine was called into her counsels, and together they took the poem to the well-known printer, Mr Miller, and had a few copies beautifully printed and bound. One of these was at once despatched to Walter Scott—"that he might there present it—Ah, to whom?"

The kind little plan succeeded as far as affording the young author a delightful surprise, and probably procuring for him the exquisite satisfaction of hearing his

verses read in the voice of all others most melodious to his ears. Now there is a passage in 'Rob Roy' so unnecessary to the story but so full of feeling that one cannot doubt that it recalls a precious memory. Die Vernon has been reading Frank Osbaldistone's translation of Ariosto, and has announced herself one of the unpopular family of "Tell-truths." "'There is a great deal of it,' said she, glancing along the paper and interrupting the sweetest sounds which mortal ears can drink in—those, namely, of a youthful poet's verses read by the lips which are dearest to him." The frank criticism was probably a reminiscence of Miss Cranstoun, but at the close of the sentence Scott's thoughts had taken the path which he generally kept closely barred against them.

"The lips dearest" to Scott were, as we know, to be for another. In the autumn of 1796, when he "put it to the touch, to win or lose it all," Miss Cranstoun stood his firm friend. "Many an anxious thought I have about you," she ends a letter in which, in Diana's fashion, she cloaks anxiety under airy nonsense. She had earned the right to sign herself "most affectionately yours, J. A. C." If, after the blow fell, she and Erskine held their breath, dreading the effect on the "ungovernable mind" of their "romantic friend," it was because even they failed to gauge the quality of the man. Were the days of that lonely autumnal ride from Kincardineshire to Kelso in his mind when he penned, in 'Quentin Durward,' this gallant passage *virginibus puerisque*: "Melancholy, even love-melancholy, is not so deeply-seated, at least in minds of a manly and elastic character, as the soft enthusiasts who suffer under it are fond of believing. It yields to unexpected and striking impressions, to changes of place, . . . and to the busy hum of mankind. In a few minutes Quentin's attention was as much engrossed . . . by the busy streets of Liège as if there had not been a Countess Isabella in the world."



The year 1797 saw vital changes in the little circle of intimates. When in the fall of the year Scott brought home his bride, sprightly Charlotte Carpenter, the Edinburgh Light Horse and the "brotherhood of the Mountain" vied with each other in attentions to his wife, but the kind friend and confidante was not there to give her blessing.

It is a flagrant violation of the dramatic unities when the confidante of the first act is the heroine of the second. In the midst of her sisterly care for her brother and frank comradeship with his friends, Miss Cranstoun was surprised into a romantic and passionate love-affair of her own.

The new day that broke with the French Revolution sent level shafts of light to all regions of the civilised world. Coleridge, then "a Grecian" in the top form at Christ's Hospital, caught the radiance, and inspired forthwith foretold the time—

"When every land from pole to pole  
Shall boast one independent soul."

This same vivifying light struck on the ardent spirit of a certain young Austrian nobleman living in the splendid gloom of a mediæval castle in Styria. His ancestors of the historic house of Purgstall had in earlier ages repelled the invading Turk; now, in the noblest of its children, the race was to salute with rapture the coming of the new era, even in the hour when itself was destined to perish.

Of singular beauty, feminine in its refinement, Count Wenceslaus had the qualities that can only be described in the phraseology of his own day,—sensibility, ardour, generosity, patriotism. Like Thomas Day and other followers of Rousseau, he had a romantic love of such utilities as agriculture and popular education. In the summer he came to England, the home of progress and freedom; not Oxford but Liverpool, not "noble-

men's seats" but reformed prisons, were the goal of this single-minded pilgrim. Unluckily for us, his diary stops with his arrival in Edinburgh, and we can only imagine the welcome so frail a body and so intense a spirit would find in the sympathetic circle at the Dugald Stewarts', and how these characteristics would appeal to a woman like Miss Cranstoun, in whom motherliness and idealism were equally strong. "The most innocent creature in the world," in this criticism Thomas Thomson probably summed up the general opinion of the Parliament House on Miss Cranstoun's high-born suitor.

This strangely assorted but deeply devoted pair were married in June 1797, and had one of the most remarkable honeymoons in the annals of matrimony. In Paris, just recovered from the Reign of Terror, Purgstall's friendship for Barthélemy exposed him to real danger. Later they moved to Zurich, attracted in the first instance by friendship with Lavater and the desire to make Pestalozzi's acquaintance, but retained there by the delight of finding Goethe in the neighbourhood.

The home, Schloss Reggersburg, to which Count Purgstall brought his bride was one of several he possessed in Styria. If one may trust a little contemporary sepia drawing, it must have been like those vast intricacies of turrets and walls with which Albrecht Dürer crowns a rocky height. The Countess likened it to Stirling Castle, and characteristically regretted that it did not open on to the Parliament Square in Edinburgh.

She wrote to Scott on his marriage in her warm-hearted way: "To have a conviction that those I love are happy, and don't forget me!—I have no way to express my feelings—they come in a flood and destroy me." They break out again, those warm, strong feelings of hers, in the last sentence of her letter: "Is it then true, my God, that 'Earl Walter' [a nickname among Scott's intimates] is a Benedick, and that I am in Styria? Well! bless us all, prays the separated from her brethren—J. A. P."

She had an eventful, important, anxious, ultimately tragic life, the poor, brilliant Countess. Her husband had a place at Court near the Emperor's person. The Austrian Court was punctilious as to lineage, but about the Cranstoun quarterings there was no dubiety, a genealogist among her husband's kin tracing her descent through the Argylls, the Stuarts, Lady Jane Beaufort, back to St Louis!

One child was born of this marriage, a frail, beautiful boy, singularly gifted in heart and brain. The Countess, that he might speak "the language of her heart," imported an Aberdeenshire nurse, and the last descendant of the Purgstalls lisped precocious wisdom in good Scottish speech. Scottish in tongue, in heart, and in modes of expression, Countess Purgstall remained. Once when some English travellers expressed surprise that the Emperor Franz Joseph moved so freely about his people, she answered in a sentence which positively demands a Scottish intonation: "He that has the virtues of the Antonines can dispense with the guards of Nero."

During the evil Napoleonic years the lot of a man in Count Purgstall's position was full of labour, unrest, and bitter mortification. His means, his leisure, were eagerly sacrificed, nor was his life withheld. He had been made a prisoner in the campaign in Northern Italy in 1809, and though shortly afterwards liberated, his health was shattered by the hardships he had undergone. He died at Florence in 1811. Consumption with him, as with many others, seemed merely to accelerate and enhance the life of the spirit. Just before his death he wrote in blank verse a hymn to that indwelling spirit of goodness which he had found alike in the beauty of antiquity, in the sunset over the Arno, and "in the heart of my Nina."

She had still her son to live for, and for him she could dream of a brilliant future. Of his mathema-

tical genius Dugald Stewart declared that he had never seen anything of such splendid promise at so early an age. His eager delight in history and literature offered ground where mother and son could meet: together they translated into German songs of Campbell and of Scott. The mother's heart was broken when this bright and beautiful spirit was snatched away on the threshold of manhood.

Her friends were anxious that she should return to Scotland, but in her romantic, impulsive way she had promised her son to lay her dust beside his, and in her devotion she had believed that death would not too long delay. But she had not calculated on the vigorous constitution and indestructible vitality that she had inherited from her race,—vitality which can reject no element of interest, no joy nor sorrow up to the last of life. She had to contend for her possessions against innumerable claimants; for twelve years she suffered bodily pains and weakness, her coffin was prepared with her husband's letters laid in it; but death did not come, nor, in spite of herself, could she lose her vivid interest both in the large world of Europe and the small world of her feudal household.

In 1834, when she was seventy-four and completely bedridden, there came over her an unspeakable longing for her own people and the speech of her own country, and a great dread of dying alone among servants. Hearing by chance that Captain Basil Hall (the son of friends in Scotland unseen for forty years) was travelling in Italy, she, grasping at straws, wrote entreating him to bring his family to spend the winter with her in her Castle of Hainfeld. It must have seemed a kindly miracle to the solitary woman to find at her bedside those whose faces and names recalled the friends of her youth. They gave what age often craves for most, sympathetic interest in old tales and reminiscences. Her dearest delight was the hour when



the rest of the party was at dinner and the Halls' nurse brought the baby-boy to play on her bed. She knew the companionable quality of a good Scottish servant. In urging her invitation she had written to Captain Hall: "Your precious Scotch nursery-maid and I will understand each other famously. Such a person ceases to be a servant—she is a friend."

Of all the Countess' lively talk the most delightful related to the old merry days in Frederick Street when she and Scott and all the rest were young. As she described her young womanhood and her independent ways, bordering at times on eccentricity, it flashed through Basil Hall's mind that she might have suggested traits in the heroine of 'Rob Roy.' The Captain's mind was as ingenious as his hands; and following up a clue was as fascinating to him as devising a bell-rope for the invalid lady.

The first point he established was that 'Rob Roy' was lacking in her presentation set of Waverley Novels. He procured a copy of the book and read it aloud, watching narrowly to see how it affected his listener. It excited her more than any of the other novels had done, especially the parts that relate to Northumberland. "Oh, I know that scene," she would exclaim; "I remember describing it myself to Walter Scott. That anecdote he had from me." But while she discussed the other characters freely, about Diana she preserved a silence so significant that the Halls felt—or imagined—that it would have been an impertinence to introduce the subject. It is only fair to add that Lockhart entirely repudiates Captain Hall's theories.

It was the Captain's good fortune to be the means of clearing up a misunderstanding that weighed on the warm heart of the old Countess. She had some years previously sent Scott a memoir of her husband and son, and had been hurt to receive no acknowledgment from her old friend. In a letter the Captain had from



JANE ANNE CRANSTOUN, COUNTESS PURGSTALL.

*After a Medallion by Thorwäldsen.*





Lockhart during his stay at Hainfeld, Lockhart mentions finding among Scott's papers an undated letter to the Countess thanking her for the memoir. She was much agitated at learning the fact, and was eager to be put in possession of so precious a letter. Before it came she had passed beyond the need of wise and consoling words. She had been urgent with the Halls to remain with her during the winter; again and again they had delayed their departure rather than disappoint her. With a curious confidence she begged them to remain over the spring solstice, assuring them with a prescience serious but not uncheerful that that date would set a term to their pious offices towards her. Nor was she mistaken. Almost as if she meant to show her habitual considerateness in the very act of dying, she died suddenly and peacefully a day or two before the date fixed for her friends' departure.

One cannot but lament that she never saw the letter Lockhart hastened to forward to her. It had been written as far back as 1822, when Scott was at the height of his fame and prosperity; yet, taking his tone from the sorrowful circumstances of his correspondent, he wrote pensively and soberly of the chances and changes of life.

"This is a melancholy letter," he wrote, "but it is chiefly so from the sad tone of yours who have such real disasters to lament, while mine is only the humorous sadness which a retrospect on human life is sure to produce on the most prosperous. For my own course of life, I have only to be ashamed of its prosperity and afraid of its termination, for I have little reason, arguing on the doctrine of chances, to expect the same good fortune will attend me for ever. I have an affectionate and promising family, many friends, few unfriends, and, I think, no enemies. I dwell among my own people, and have many whose happiness is dependent on me, and which I study to the best of my power.

I trust my temper, which you know is good and easy, has not been spoilt by flattery or prosperity. Should things, therefore, change with me—and in these times, or indeed in any times, such change is to be apprehended—I trust I shall be able to surrender these adventitious advantages, as I would my upper dress, as something extremely comfortable, but which I can make shift to do without.”

It was with such sobering reflections that Sir Walter, in the time of his prosperity, called up “a cloudy screen, to temper the deceitful ray.”

III.

FAMILY FRIENDS

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TYTLERS OF WOODHOUSELEE

CLERKS OF ELDIN AND ADAMS OF BLAIR-ADAM

MRS MACLEAN CLEPHANE OF TORLOISK



## TYTLERS OF WOODHOUSELEE.

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IF we were to seek through the pages of English history and biography for the perfect type of home life, there is small doubt but that all suffrages would unite on the household of Sir Thomas More at Chelsea: Scotsmen would probably be at one in claiming the second place for the Tytlers of Woodhouselee in the last decade of the eighteenth and first decade of the nineteenth century.

There are curious points of similarity in these two households, separated from each other by three centuries and by different nationalities. In both the most tender and cheerful home affections centred round a man who divided his time between professional activities and ardent study; in both a beautiful and well-ordered country home received into evening quiet, to garden walks or fireside concerts, a master returning from his labours in a neighbouring city. The splash of oars, the click of his wicket-gate announcing Sir Thomas More's return, were not more welcome to his household than to the Woodhouselee family the lamp duly set in the tower-room and the quick roll of wheels up the straight beech avenue below the house. In both the life of the household interpenetrated the larger social and intellectual life. The system and theory of education in both households were at variance alike with the severity of the sixteenth and formality of the eighteenth century. "I have given



you kisses enough, but stripes hardly ever," writes More to his children. And of his reasonable household discipline Erasmus tells us approvingly, "He controls his family with the same easy hand" (*i.e.*, "with jokes and caresses"); "no tragedies; no quarrels." In the same way, when Mrs Tytler had conscientious scruples about her husband's indulgence of his children, Lord Woodhouselee would gaily defend himself. "I do it on principle. I know they are the kind of children with whom it will answer best." "Now," he would exclaim when household affairs had for the moment removed maternal control,— "now let us give ourselves up to all manner of licentiousness." In both cases wisdom was justified of her children. Erasmus, a bachelor and dependent on quiet and on creature comforts, records of the Chelsea household: "His whole house breathes happiness, and no one enters it who is not the better for it." At Woodhouselee the modest, intelligent children shared the society and enjoyed the talk of the brilliant and distinguished guests whom their father brought to the house, while these, laying aside all gravity and importance, joined in the family frolics round the fire, or on summer afternoons sat in the arbour consecrated to friendship and the Muses. We may not claim for the intimates of Woodhouselee the place in history of some of the guests at Chelsea, — even Jeffrey would hardly claim for the 'Edinburgh Review' equal importance with Erasmus' edition of the New Testament, — but they included many of the best wits of the time. Whatever their gifts, their special interests, or their opinions, they found in their host one whose alert mind, wide knowledge, and quick sympathies could meet them at every point. At Woodhouselee and in the tastes of its master were gracefully blended the traditions that we are pleased to divide into classical and romantic.

In a hollow on the steep slope of the Pentlands an old

gray peel tower dating from the sixteenth century had been converted by William Tytler into a commodious country house. His son Alexander, Lord Woodhouselee, added ampler and more ornate rooms. The eighteenth century, which carved and dressed and smoothed nature into symmetry, laid no ineffectual finger on the wild steep hillside behind the house, but from the arbour might be viewed a landscape such as her poets and painters loved. How dear this wide fertility was to the eyes which habitually looked out on it can be learned from two inscriptions cut with a diamond on the window in Lord Woodhouselee's study:—

“*Laudaturque domus longos quae prospicit agros.*”

And these lines from Cowper:—

“Groves, plains, and smoking villages remote,  
Scenes must be beautiful which, daily viewed,  
Please daily—and whose novelty survives  
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.”

Quite in the spirit of the eighteenth century is the piety which raised a stone urn and pedestal with a filial inscription to William Tytler. This William Tytler, a lawyer in Edinburgh, is distinguished from other Edinburgh men of letters in the middle of the eighteenth century by the subjects of his favourite studies. In the very presence of Hume and Robertson, he, for the first time for two centuries, championed the innocence of Mary Stewart; he was the editor of ‘*The Kingis Quair*’—the rarest work of genius ever produced on a throne—and “*Christ’s Kirk on the Green*,” which he also attributed to James I. His studies in old Scottish poetry and music drew him on to take an interest in old Scottish ballads. It was for him that old Mrs Brown of Falkland dictated to her nephew her priceless collection of ballads. His son Alexander, later Lord

Woodhouselee, was a classical scholar who all through life carried Horace in his pocket, read Epictetus in his garden-walk, and could turn any experience into graceful Latin verse. To this he added unusual knowledge of Italian, Spanish, and French literature. His little book on the Art of Translation is not only marked by elegant taste and delicate discrimination, but is also a monument of wide reading in authors, English and foreign, who to most of us are merely names. It is more remarkable to find a man of his polished and definitely eighteenth-century turn of mind among the first to welcome the new romantic literature of Germany, and himself translating Schiller's 'Robbers.'

Probably it was young Scott's enthusiasm for all he could gather of this romantic literature that first attracted Lord Woodhouselee's attention. He must early have entered sympathetically into Scott's project of collecting Ballads for the Minstrelsy, for before 1800 the precious MS. collection made for William Tytler was in Scott's hands.

It was in the summers after his marriage, when he and Mrs Scott were living at Lasswade some four miles off across the fertile plain, that Walter Scott used to appear joyously at Woodhouselee soon after breakfast and insist on carrying off the whole family for an idle morning among the hills. To the eager young people he told long romantic stories such as some years earlier he had told to Irvine on Salisbury Crags, such as, years afterwards, he was to tell to the whole listening world. If in the firelight up in the study he told ghost-stories till his hearers dared neither ring the bell nor open the door, the Tytlers in their turn had a veritable historical ghost of their own. Had not mysterious taps and steps been heard in the big bedroom? nay, had not the stout-hearted old housekeeper, Cecy Low, seen poor woeful "Lady Anne" times without number, and like a God-

fearing woman refused to be afraid because she knew that "she canna gang beyond her commission"? Serene in her piety, Cecy had taken time to observe that the ghost wore a "gown of Manchester goods with a wee flowerie on it,"—a detail which greatly pleased Walter Scott.

Once John Leyden paid a visit to Woodhouselee, and sleeping in a room within sound of the torrent tumbling by, left his mark in the shape of a sonnet scratched on the window-pane. It was characteristic of the best Scottish society of the time that its good-breeding found ample toleration for rusticity or eccentricity if only these were accompanied by genius or worth. In the Woodhouselee household Leyden could have found a kindred spirit in Mr Black, the awkward, gifted, affectionate tutor. The tutor was a great institution in Scottish households of that day, and if there was an odd touch of Dominie Sampson about many of them, yet no educational machinery has been more successful in turning out pupils who loved their book.

The Tytlers' beloved Mr Black used to exchange paraphrases of Horace with Lord Woodhouselee, adapting them to household events, or at supper, sitting next his patron, would argue points of learning or make shamefaced jokes; yet so shy was he, that when the family settled down for a musical evening some one had to leave the door ajar that he might slip in unobserved. In the intervals of instructing the various members of the family in some of the ordinary and more of the extraordinary subjects of education, Mr Black found time to write a *Life of Tasso*. A more remarkable fact is that he found a publisher willing to give him five hundred pounds for the copyright.

To Woodhouselee the Edinburgh Reviewers brought their stories, their jokes, their rivalries in wit and conversation. On one occasion Scott, Mackintosh,

Sydney Smith, Jeffrey, and some other first-rate talkers were all dining at Woodhouselee. Scott contented himself with telling some delightful stories, but resigned when Mackintosh seemed anxious to be heard. Jeffrey snatched the ball, then other speakers flashed in, all so anxious to be heard that no one had leisure to eat. Only Sydney was silent, discussing course after course till he had completely dined; then, seizing his opportunity, he set the table in a roar with some preposterous inspiration. All evening afterwards he kept the guests convulsed with the humour of the only man present who had dined. Of one thing we may be certain, the courteous host himself lost no fragment of his guests' wit and wisdom from any desire to make his own voice heard. He had the rarer and more enduring charm of being an alert and sympathetic listener. There was, indeed, one accomplishment that he had cultivated more carefully than any of his contemporaries, an accomplishment we associate more with English bishops than Scotch judges, the writing of elegant Latin verse. We have heard enough of the epitaph on Maida and its unfortunate false quantity. Scott's dogs had a fatal influence on the prosody of his friends, but the general reader may leave it to the scholar to find out the false quantity in Lord Woodhouselee's charming epitaph on Camp: the wit and gentleness of it may suffice for him.

On March 1809 Lord Woodhouselee enters in his commonplace-book: "This morning in the Parliament House, while the Court were just sitting down, Walter Scott whispered to me from the Clerks' table that he had met with a great family misfortune last night; his favourite dog Camp (whom he has recorded in 'Marmion,' and whose portrait may . . . be seen in Raeburn's picture) had died suddenly during the night. While the Court were occupied in a trifling cause in



which I had no concern, I wrote down with a pencil and handed to him the following *Epicedium* :—

IN AMICI CANEM CUI COGNOMEN  
CAMPO FATO FUNCTUM.

‘Occidat illa dies, Domino, Dominaeque sinistra,  
Quum Campus campos ivit ad Elysios !  
Campestres Nymphae Campum deflete peremptum  
Campana clangens lugeat exequias.  
Campus quum Stygias tristes migravit ad undas  
Cognati subito Cerberus ora notat  
Demulcet saevi rabiem vox fratris amoena  
Sanctaque utrosque canes jungit amicitia.’

Walter Scott is delighted with this, and is to have it painted below Camp’s picture.”

This love of the lower creation was another bond between Scott and the Tytler household. Once Scott drove up to call at Woodhouselee and found no one at home except one of the golden-haired little daughters, who was sitting under a tree nursing a sick duck. He proposed to her to come for a drive with him, but, faithful to her trust, the child would only consent if the invalid might come too. In some Elysian fields, guarded by Camp and Maida, that duck may have joined the sentimental hen and little black pig of Abbotsford.

The secret of spreading familiar love of letters through a whole family is still to seek. If ever a man made literature alive with delightful associations it was Walter Scott; if ever books of irresistible attraction grew on library shelves it was at Abbotsford; yet Scott saw with amused acquiescence the complete indifference of his children to “the dainties that are bred in a book”; even Sophia showed no curiosity to discover for herself how far the ‘Lady of the Lake’ was truly “inferior poetry,” whereas all the young Tytlers grew up in the habit and familiarity of letters. Mr Black’s ‘Life of Tasso,’ Papa’s ‘Translations of Petrarch’s Sonnets’ were



as much matter for fireside discussion as the prospects for the moors or the fishing in Glencorse Burn. The children took for granted that they would write books as they grew up, and their father gravely hoped that he might live to read them. In three of the family the promise was fulfilled. Alexander Fraser Tytler was perhaps the most remarkable of the young Scotsmen sent by Lord Melville to lay the foundations of British rule in India. Though dying at the age of twenty-seven, he had produced two volumes on the political state of India of which James Mill said: "From no individual, perhaps, has the British people as yet received a mass of information respecting their interest in India equal in value to that which has been communicated to them by this young and public-spirited judge."

Ann Fraser Tytler achieved for herself a pleasant position as a writer of children's stories. The evangelical movement which spread from Clapham reached Scotland in the second and third decade of the nineteenth century. If this religious movement has left little mark of any value on general literature, it took for its province the story-book for children written "for example of life and instruction of manners." Those of us who are old enough to have been brought up on Mary and Florence and the "Leila" books have long ago forgotten the edifying dialogues, and only remember the agreeable incidents—the lost needle, the mad bull—and the sense of suffused cheerfulness in the little green volumes.

The family gifts culminated in Patrick, familiarly Peter. "A wonderful boy" his father confidently declared him to be on his failing to distinguish himself at the High School, gauging the boy's quality by the only sure test, the use he made of his playtime. Percy's 'Reliques,' read on the nursery floor, was followed by an original composition, the 'History of the Moors,' in half text.

When the impulse, inevitable in studious, gently-nurtured youths, came to Patrick Tytler to clothe his

own thoughts in numbers and in fine images, Milton was the lofty model of his choice. In 1810, when Lord Woodhouselee erected the little memorial pillar, Patrick wrote the Woodhouselee Masque, a play modelled on "Comus," commemorating the gentle household life and the romantic home. If Walter Scott owed some of the best pages in the *Minstrelsy* to the MS. supplied from Woodhouselee, he more than repaid the debt when, probably in 1823, he first suggested to Patrick Tytler the writing of a complete History of Scotland. Mr Tytler stayed at Abbotsford on this occasion.

There is no art more difficult than that of reproducing conversation, unless, indeed, it consists of aphorisms, arguments, or triumphant repartees, like Dr Johnson's. Several of Scott's guests have tried to reproduce his flow of vivid story, emotional quotation, or humorous comment. Their success is limited: it was easiest to reproduce his tales and anecdotes, and these, as all confess, sound trite without the voice and play of countenance. The most lively impression of Scott's conversation is conveyed by Lord Cockburn's description — "The Waverley novels cut up into talk"—or the bald jottings of Patrick Tytler's note-book. Lovers of Lockhart and the Waverleys can readily fill up the context in such suggestive headings as—"Sticks to learn with in the office [old Mr Scott's]; The hand to guard the head." Anecdotes: "Mungo Park's brother striking the dirk through the board"; "The armoury anecdote about the red deer in the pass"; "Of the trial of an Englishman and a Scotsman at Carlisle—two packmen"; "The tradition of the Laidlaw family as to throwing ashes of a calf on a running stream." We all recognise an old friend in this entry: "The anecdote of Axlecleugh and the Druidical place of worship and Lady Scott." Most of us have sympathised with her ladyship's feelings on being roused from sleep to be told a doubtful etymology to which she was totally indifferent, but one would like

to have the context of "The rats at Ashestiel and Lady Scott." The most priceless entry is, however, this: "The children compare Walter Scott to Mr Bennet in 'Pride and Prejudice.'" So many other discerning children have made the same discovery about *their* father, that one must conclude that Miss Austen has seized on the eternal and essential father-of-a-family, but one hardly expected to recognise the traits in Sir Walter.

The affairs of the Bannatyne Club brought the veteran man of letters and the young historian into intimate relations: they succeeded one another as Laureates of the Club.

In "The Gray Brother," as we all know, Scott has left a memorial of his happy summers at Lasswade, binding in one sheaf the homes of his friends. No one knew better than he the magic that can be got out of a name. The quatrain which describes the romantic tenure of the old lords of Penicuik—"free for a blast"—and the hazel shade of Auchendinny, where Henry Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, was wearing out his long cheerful day, ends in a musical fall with "haunted Woodhouselee."

It is still "haunted Woodhouselee," but haunted now by the shadowy skirts and shining hair of girlish forms vanishing up the garden-walks, by the dim figure of a small boy reading big books by the nursery fire, by the echoes of high discourse, wise counsels, and honest laughter. So should all houses be haunted where the same race has lived gently and worthily from generation to generation.

## CLERKS OF ELDIN AND ADAMS OF BLAIR-ADAM.

IF ever Heaven dealt bountifully with a family in the matter of brains, it was with the Clerks of Penicuik, with a Benjamin's portion added for the younger branch, the Clerks of Eldin.

Thanks to their poverty and their ambition, the Scottish lairds of the eighteenth century make a spirited contrast to the broad-acred, fox-hunting squires of the southern kingdom. The eldest son of the laird, especially in the Lothians and Border Counties, was often bred to the bar and sometimes educated at Leyden, gaining thus knowledge of the world and a touch of foreign breeding. Those who remained on the land found no easy living from rents, but when brains and capital were sunk in draining, planting, quarrying, and the working of coal-mines, the return must be reckoned not only in material prosperity, but in that energy and alertness of character that forbid stagnation for several generations.

While all through the century sour marshlands were being turned into corn-fields, and trees were everywhere graciously covering the bareness of the land, enterprise and taste were quickening the wits and widening the horizon of many a country gentleman besides Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Cockburn of Ormiston, the father of Scottish gardening. The formal groves

and avenues that, early in the century, the Laird of Blair-Adam laid out on the bare slopes and plains of his property in Kinross, were not without their influence on the genius of his distinguished sons, the brothers Adam, the most noted architects of the eighteenth century, and the originators of the most charming of all domestic decoration. Much of the antiquarian passion of the time arose incidentally from these practical activities; the new roads that were everywhere threading the country followed often the old Roman lines of march, the draining of lands laid bare old camps and other curious remains. All tastes and hobbies—antiquarian, artistic, and scientific—were the common heritage of the race of Clerk. There were at least three remarkable Clerks in succession. Sir John Clerk, second baronet of Penicuik, had been one of the Commissioners at the time of the Union, had filled high functions in the law, and been Baron of the Exchequer. That was his public life; as a private gentleman he had not only built and quarried and mined successfully, but had turned an upland moor at the foot of the Pentlands into a wooded demesne pleasantly beautified with parks and ponds and shrubberies. He had brought back from his foreign tour, as he confesses, “an understanding of pictures better than became my purse,” and a skill in music “better than became a gentleman.”

The Scottish mind when it is not theological is prone to be antiquarian. An honest piety sufficed Sir John Clerk in the matter of theology, but all his interests—his wide classical reading, his love of art, his local patriotism—fed his passion for antiquarian research. Two generations of descendants grew up at Penicuik surrounded by Roman sculptures, inscriptions, coins, most of which old Sir John had found on the estate of Cramond, the property he had acquired with his second wife. A Roman camp on another of



his properties in Dumfriesshire produced something more valuable to the world than coin or inscription. The family hobby served also as the family joke to three generations of Clerks. Sir John's grandsons delighted to tell how a Dumfriesshire shepherd had interrupted their grandfather's lecture on the camp with the contemptuous words, "Prætorium here, Prætorium there, I made it wi' a slaughter spade." 'The Antiquary,' indeed, is full of reminiscences of Clerk tales and Clerk talk. It will be remembered that on the eventful drive to Queensferry Mr Jonathan Oldbuck clasps on his knees a precious copy of the 'Iter Septentrionale' of Alexander Gordon. This excellent old antiquary was the friend and correspondent of Sir John Clerk. Echoes of his fervid conversation—notably his enthusiastic identification of the *castra stativa* of Agricola with some place in the Grampians—supplied Sir John's grandchildren with some of their best quotations and imitations.

John Clerk of Eldin, the father of Scott's particular crony, William Clerk, was no whit behind his father, Sir John, in vigour and varied accomplishment. A seventh son, with elder brothers in the law and the two services, John Clerk was a merchant in Edinburgh, having his shop in the Luckenbooths,—“a line of business then very common to the sons of gentlemen, but not congenial to his heart,” as his nephew, Lord Chief Commissioner Adam, tells us. Following one of his many congenial “bents,” namely geology, Clerk discovered coal on an estate near Lasswade, bought the same, and there built his modest mansion of Eldin, and “laid out his beautiful terraces and his singular garden.”

The feature on the property most interesting to the owner, and, as it turned out, most profitable to the world at large, was the pond where he sailed his miniature fleet of boats, his handsome face keen and concentrated as he directed the petty manœuvres. Professor



Playfair, the distinguished man of science, used to say of John Clerk: "He was more guided in his pursuits by inclination and capacities of his own mind, and less by circumstance and situation, than any man I ever knew. He studied the surface of the land as if he had been a general, and the surface of the sea as if he had been an admiral, yet had no connection with either profession."

Yet this elderly man sailing his miniature boats on an artificial pond had the reputation of having revolutionised naval warfare. All Scotland, at any rate, was convinced that Rodney owed his victories to careful study of Clerk's 'Naval Tactics.' The admiral had certainly remarked to Lord Melville, "There is one Clerk, a countryman of yours, who has taught us all to fight, and appears to know more of the matter than any of us. If ever I meet the French fleet I mean to try his way."<sup>1</sup> Lord Melville was present with Pitt at Walmer Castle when an officer, straight from the battle of Camperdown, was introduced. When he mentioned that Lord Duncan had broken through the Dutch line, Lord Melville, always eager for the credit of his country, cried, "Here's a new instance of success of Clerk's system." It was characteristic of the Clerks to turn the family distinction into the family joke. Lady Anna Maria Elliot, an observer as keen as her mother and as kindly as her father, describes the Clerks of Eldin as "revolving round their aged father whom they nickname 'Naval Tactics.'"

The family characteristics were strongly marked in all the members. Lord Cockburn describes the whole family as being full of "talent, caprice, obstinacy, worth, kindness, and oddity." Old "Naval Tactics" spoke the old-fashioned broad Scots natural to his father and ad-

<sup>1</sup> "Nelson was, as we learn from Beatty's narrative, a frequent reader of Clerk of Eldin's 'Naval Tactics,' and it is certain that the memorandum we are considering was not a little indebted to that famous and most illuminating work."—Thursfield.

hered to by his son John till far on into the nineteenth century. He took equal delight in jokes and in disputations—a characteristic also of his son William, according to Sir Walter Scott. It is pleasant to add on the testimony of his nephew, Lord Chief Commissioner Adam, that the noble-looking old man “grew every year more mild, more communicative, and more endearing to those about him.”

One can measure the good relations of this caustic, outspoken, humorous family by the saying of old Clerk when his son John was the most prominent member of the Scottish Bar: “I remember the time when people, seeing John limping in the street, used to ask ‘What lame lad that was,’ and would get for an answer, ‘The son of Clerk of Eldin’; but now when I pass I hear them say, ‘What auld grey-headed man is that?’ and the answer is, ‘That’s the father of John Clerk.’” Incidentally the story gives a pleasant picture of the intimate country-town life of the Edinburgh streets, where every figure stood out distinctly for recognition or inquiry.

The ‘Naval Tactics’ have not passed away with the old three-deckers, and the elegant pastime of Clerk’s leisure, his etchings on copper, are still a delight to those who hunt them up in the noble folio published by the Bannatyne Society. The firm touch and well-defined light and shade are characteristic of the hand that wrought them; the choice of subjects—ruined castles and wide prospects—of that feeling for the “picturesque” which, at the end of the eighteenth century, led the way to the romantic love of nature. Some of the etchings are from Clerk’s own drawings, others from water-colours by his master, Sandhys. Nor were the burin and paint-brush his only tools; his greenhouse was so densely decorated with plaster figures of his modelling that the plants were crowded out. The same taste and deftness had descended to all his children. Their mother, a Miss Adam of Blair-Adam, came of an equally gifted

family, and so naturally did artistic expression come to all the Clerks that they could not understand Walter Scott's inability to reproduce the landscapes he loved so well.

A characteristic use they made of their hereditary gift was to employ it in derision of the hereditary antiquarian hobby. John Clerk, the eldest son, used to model heads and medals, mutilate them, bury them in likely places, and leave them to be dug up and identified by his father and uncle (Sir George Clerk). One such head was carried off by another connoisseur, Lord Buchan, and presented to the Antiquarian Museum.

John Clerk, the younger, was the first man to recognise Henry Raeburn. He was a young advocate at the time, living in rooms in the High Street. The patronage cannot be described as magnificent. As Raeburn came up the stairs, on his way to dine with Clerk, he heard his host "flyting" in broad Scots with his landlady: she had only provided three herrings and three potatoes; when a guest was expected, six herrings and six potatoes were the proper allowance.

John Clerk was some eight or nine years older than his brother William, Scott's friend, and had the family characteristics more intensely. He was abler, coarser, harsher, and had at once more genius and more heart. The Clerks of Eldin were Whigs. John Clerk's politics had been pronounced, and even defiant, in days when it required heroism to be a Whig. In 1794, when political panic turned honest men into cowards and kindly men into tyrants, Harry Erskine was removed from being Dean of Faculty on account of having taken part in a meeting to protest against the war with France. When one who had been Erskine's friend recorded his vote in favour of depriving him of his office, the clock struck twelve, and with fearful wit, worthy of the Recording Angel, John Clerk said quietly, "And when the cock crew thrice, Peter denied his Master."

William Clerk's Whiggism must have been of a comparatively quiescent type, for at the most heated times no difference seems to have arisen between him and Scott.

According to Lockhart, it was in 1788, when Scott joined the Civil Law Class, that he made the acquaintance of William Clerk. He was then a tall, rather ungainly lad of seventeen, so slovenly in his dress that William Clerk on first acquaintance rallied him on his clothes, so sweet-tempered that he turned off with a jest what many a young Scotsman would have resented for life. But there is a footnote in the 'Life of Napoleon' that suggests either that Scott had been a guest at Eldin at an earlier age or that his boyish instincts had survived into youth.

The passage in question is one of the footnotes, as charming as they are rare, where Scott allows himself a personal reminiscence. When discussing the battle of the Nile in the 'Life of Napoleon,' he pays a tribute to the "patriotic sage," the author of 'Naval Tactics,' and appends this note: ". . . His suavity, nay, simplicity of manner, equalled the originality of his genius. This trifling tribute is due from one who, honoured with his regard from boyhood, has stood by his side while he was detailing and illustrating the system which taught British seamen to understand and use their own force, at an age so early that he can remember having been guilty of abstracting from the table some of the little cork models by which Mr Clerk exemplified his manœuvres, unchecked but by his good-natured railing when he missed a supposed line-of-battle ship, and complained that the demonstration was crippled by its absence."

Scott was even in his youth too sweet-tempered to chafe under the dulness of his home life, and when, in his maturity, he described it in the correspondence of Alan Fairford, the frugality, formality, and methodical routine are touched in with gentle humour and a real apprecia-



tion of their worth; but he seems to have recognised early that the George Square household was not one where a young man would lightly introduce his friends, confident alike of their welcome and their enjoyment. The reverse of this was the case at Eldin. Scott found a household atmosphere in which he could breathe freely. The racy, unconventional talk was full of humour, the antiquarian tastes and curious knowledge of the Clerks pleasantly stimulating.

Old "Naval Tactics" found an excellent listener to his theories in the lad who had worked out all the battles in Orme's 'History of India' with shells and stones. Young James Clerk, a midshipman, showed his appreciation of another important side of Scott's character when he introduced him to his comrades: "As for Mr Scott, mayhap you may take him for a poor lamiter, but he is the first to begin a row and the last to end it."

It was, of course, to William Clerk, the prototype of Darsie Latimer, that Scott owed his intimacy with this original family circle. On their first acquaintance William Clerk's wit, culture, light spirits, and hereditary breeding—breeding compatible apparently with a certain eccentricity of manner—had a special charm for Scott as contrasted with the heavy virtue or dull dissipation of the writer's apprentices with whom he had been thrown.

If, through life, Skene and Erskine held a dearer place in Scott's regard, yet Clerk was pre-eminently the friend of his youth. He did not, like Erskine, share Scott's literary confidences, foster his studies, and identify himself with his fame. He did not share, as Skene did, Scott's military and patriotic enthusiasm—on the contrary, he rather made game of the Edinburgh Light Horse. Nor is there anything to show that he was, like Skene, a sportsman and a lover of nature. But he is, more closely than any one, identified with the days of Scott's youth; together they had brushed

the dust of the Parliament House with their new gowns; together they had studied Heineccius, Walter Scott walking from George Square to the end of Prince's Street at seven in the morning to arouse reluctant William from his slumbers; together they had rambled through the Lothians till they were spent and penniless; together they "had heard the chimes at midnight" tolling from the steeple of the Tron.

It was on one of these country expeditions that William beguiled Walter to turn aside on the way home to be the guest of his relatives at Penicuik. The visit was often renewed, and probably Scott, with his Jacobite sympathies, made it a point to be present once at least on the 10th of June, when Lady Clerk wore pinned on her breast a cockade yellowed with age together with a white rose. It was a romantic story she had to tell. She, Mary Dacre, had been born in 1745 at Rose Castle near Carlisle on the very day when the Highland army had marched into and taken possession of the town. A Highland chief arrived at the castle and demanded quarters for himself and his men. But learning the circumstances he courteously withdrew his claim, and sending for the infant, pinned his own cockade to its frock in token that Donald Macdonald of Kinloch-Moidart had taken the family of Rose Castle under his protection. Scott, it will be remembered, uses this romantic incident in the first chapter of the 'Monastery,' where Stawarth Bolton pins his St George's Cross on the cap of Halbert Glendinning, with small thanks for his pains!

Scott—and all his other friends—speaks of William Clerk as a man of unusual and varied information, one who could talk wittily and knowledgeably on any subject with any kind of person, but in his profession—the Bar—he made no effort to advance.

While John was inspiring even judges with terror by his force and fluency, and was making the largest income ever, up to that time, made at the Bar, William lived on



a small salary, in hired rooms, dining out every night and reading up carefully in the morning—so it was said—that he might lead the conversation at night. As he grew older he assimilated to a type more often found in the northern capital than elsewhere—a well-connected bachelor; a humourist; a “crony” with gossip for old ladies and antiquarian odds and ends for old friends; a lover of creature comforts; a giver of admirable little dinners; a man who has frittered away good brains on conversation and a good heart on social intercourse.

Miss Grant of Rothiemurchus (the “Highland Lady”) was a belle in Edinburgh society in the “twenties,” and familiar with the Clerks and Sir Adam Ferguson. Being for some reason splenetic on the subject of Sir Walter, her chief object in reading the Waverleys was to find the anecdotes and “good things” purloined from William Clerk and Sir Adam, and to complain peevishly that there was no acknowledgment to these old friends.

When Miss Stirling Graham was entertaining Edinburgh society by her witty “Mystifications,” it is amusing to find William Clerk, the professed wit and diner-out, the most completely duped of her victims. “Mr Clerk said he had never met with such an extraordinary old lady, ‘for not only is she amusing herself, but my brother John is like to expire when I relate her stories at second-hand.’” When his cousin William Adam hinted that it might be Miss Stirling Graham in disguise, Clerk, who always argued a point, declared that to be impossible, as Miss Stirling Graham was sitting beside the old lady all the time!

It was partly thanks to the small compact character of Edinburgh society, partly to the Parliament House whither most of them went up daily, and most of all to Scott’s habit of keeping his friendship in repair, that the set of friends who had been young together, in the first volume of Lockhart, are, in Scott’s later Journals, the company of intimates who dine with him and walk with

him, drink old wine and tell old stories in his company. One of the pleasantest bonds that kept these old friends united was the Bannatyne Club. Both the Clerks, John, now Lord Eldin, and William, were original members.

There is a joke in connection with Lord Eldin and the Bannatyne Club that smacks curiously of the Parliament House of 1823. Sir Walter tells the tale:—

“Our Bannatyne Club goes on *à merveille*, only that at our *gaudeamus* this year we drank our wine *more majorum*, and our new judge, Lord Eldin, had a bad fall on the staircase, which has given rise to some bad jokes, as for instance, that to match ‘Coke upon Littleton’ we have got ‘Eldin upon Stair.’”

A delightful counterpart to the Bannatyne Club was the Blair-Adam Club, of which all Scott's special cronies were members. The Clerks of Eldin were, as we have seen, cousins of the Adams of Blair-Adam. Nature, when she produced four architects in one generation, had not exhausted her bounty to the Adam family; only, in this the third generation she changed the character of her gifts: William Adam, his sons and his grandson, were to be no less distinguished than their predecessors, but it was as statesmen, admirals, generals, and governors of dependencies that they were to serve their country.

William Adam had been called to the Scottish Bar in 1772—the year after Scott was born,—but entering Parliament shortly afterwards, he passed first into political life and later into a distinguished practice at the English Bar. In 1816, owing to some changes in the Scottish law, he was appointed Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury Court of Scotland. The forty years of his absence had seen a complete change of manners in Edinburgh. He had left a classical society dwelling in a romantic old town; he returned to a romantic society inhabiting a classically laid out new town. He had left the revered friends of his youth, David Hume and Principal Robertson, writing history in flowing periods from traditional

authorities; he came back to find Walter Scott illuminating history by the clairvoyance of imagination, and Thomas Thomson securing it on a solid foundation of records and documents. A lifetime of politics and legal practice had not satisfied William Adam's intellectual energies; into the serious pursuits of his younger contemporaries he threw himself as cordially as into their social life. As a member of the Bannatyne Society, he, in association with his friend, Chief Baron Shepherd, presented the Society with the Ragman Roll, the authentic list of the Scottish nobles who had made submission to Edward I.

Yet it is probable that the Lord Chief Commissioner never for a moment placed this later generation on a level with the great men of his youth. When he was an old man, nearly ninety, he took a special pride and delight in arranging a small collection of well-bound books which had belonged to his mother, and had been collected by her as a young woman. Her friends, Adam Smith, John Home, and Professor Wilkie, had all presented her with their own works; David Hume, and Dr Robertson, and Professor Adam Ferguson had recommended the rest of the collection.

Few old men could look back on a home life more strenuous and yet social than William Adam remembered in his boyhood in the *ferme ornée* which his father—the eldest of the Brothers Adam—had built and laid out at Merchiston. There his mother read her books and entertained David Hume at her tea-table—the good-humoured philosopher crashing down one of her slender chairs on one occasion; there, in the garden, stately Principal Robertson had examined little William's knowledge of Virgil.

The boy grew up with so distinct an impression that heads of families were always actively employed that he was quite taken aback when, on one occasion, going to call on his schoolfellows, Gilbert and Hugh Elliot, he was shown into a room where old Sir Gilbert Elliot was

resting after dinner with his feet on a neighbouring chair. Such leisureliness had never been seen in the Adam household.

One of the pleasantest of the Lord Chief Commissioner's stories was an account of a dinner "Hal Dundas" had given in his honour in 1776, after Adam's first success in Parliament. He had told Adam that he would make the best party he could for him, and asked, "not the fine ladies and gentlemen of Edinburgh nor the wits of Fortune's Club," but Adam's own father, his uncle, the Rev. Dr Drysdale, and the Rev. Principal Robertson. After they had for *three* hours enjoyed Mr Dundas's company and claret, he left them to go to the theatre, saying, "Adam, the cellar is at your command; you must not part with your friends till you have given them a satisfactory account of your Parliamentary campaign." The three seniors joined the young M.P. in a bumper to Mr Dundas's health. From these days of youth the Lord Chief Commissioner may have retained the quaint expression he once used in commendation of an English friend: "He had no objection to lay his lugs in the claret like any Scotsman."

But if an alien from Edinburgh for forty years, Adam had kept constant to the home in Kinross-shire which successive generations of his family had made beautiful. There yearly, at the summer solstice from 1817 to 1830, he entertained the set of old friends and eager archæologists who called themselves the "Blair-Adam Antiquarian Club." In a barouche and four, followed by a landau and pair, nine gentlemen—old and elderly—explored the country, scaled ruined battlements, descended into dungeons, encouraged the natives to invent authentic sites, argued points, lunched, laughed, and drove home in the summer twilight. Not the least pleasant of these occasions was on a summer when the weather was so hot that the party were content to view the plantations and prospects, and to sit idly together

on the grass. It was a small intimate party. Sir Walter, William Clerk, and Adam Ferguson capped one another's reminiscences of a visit the three of them had paid as boys to Charles Murray at Simprin, when they had acted plays in the schoolroom, persuading even the dominie to join the *corps dramatique*, Adam Ferguson acting as prompter, orchestra, and audience. In return the host and his friend, Sir Samuel Shepherd, recalled the "circuit fooleries" of forty years back.

Festive meetings that recur annually must, in the nature of things, carry a seed of sadness from the beginning. With the years a change passes over some or all the holiday-makers; the greetings are as cordial as ever, but there is an effort in the mirth, pauses in the laughter. This feeling has been expressed with a perfection that is final in Wordsworth's "Matthew":—

"But we are pressed by heavy laws ;  
And often, glad no more,  
We wear a face of joy, because  
We have been glad of yore."

There is a most touching reference to this poem in Scott's Journal, where he applies it to himself and Sir Adam Ferguson, two "men of mirth." It is even more touching to find him haunted by the thought in the time of his greatest success; by an anachronism—not pardonable only but beautiful—he makes Mr Jonathan Oldbuck quote the verse beginning, "My eyes are dim with childish tears," as he conducts Mr Lovel into the Green Room.

In 1818 the Lord Chief Commissioner notes that Scott went down the dungeon at Castle Campbell with all the activity of youth. Nine years later he was content to sit still while the rest ascended the Tower of St Rule at St Andrews. Those familiar with Scott's Journal will forgive the quotation in full of its most touching paragraph: "When before did I remain sitting below when there was a steeple to ascend? . . .



I think this is the first decided sign of acquiescence in my lot. I sat down on a gravestone, and recollected the first visit I made to St Andrews, now thirty-four years ago. What changes in my feelings and my fortune have taken place since then! . . . I remembered the name I then carved in Runic characters on the turf beside the Castle-gate, and I asked why it should still agitate my heart. But my friends came down from the Tower, and the foolish idea was chased away."

It was not only in this matter of remembering that Scott's youth still stirred in his blood. In this same year he paid a curious tribute to the old tried friendship of William Clerk. It will be remembered that a French General, Gourgaud, expressed himself hotly about some statement concerning himself made in Scott's 'Life of Napoleon.' Scott expected a challenge, and, old and broken as he was, the blood was still so hot in his veins, the standard of honour—as he had learned it in his youth—so imperative, that he was quite prepared to accept it. It was to the Darsie Latimer of old days that he turned with the request to be his second if occasion should require it, and the rather dried-up Epicurean old humorist acceded promptly to the request. Fortunately no such service was required.

There was a sister, Miss Elizabeth Clerk, who lived with Lord Eldin. She had much of the Clerk cleverness and artistic skill. There is but one reference to her in Scott's writing, but it is the saddest passage in the Journal.

She died on the 17th January 1826, the morrow of the day when the fatal news of Constable's failure had reached Sir Walter. "My old acquaintance, Miss Elizabeth Clerk, sister of Will, died suddenly. I cannot choose but wish it had been S. W. S.,<sup>1</sup> and yet the feeling is unmanly; I have Anne, my wife, and Charles to look after."

<sup>1</sup> Tom Purdie, on Sir Walter receiving his baronetcy, had marked the sheep S. W. S.



## MRS MACLEAN CLEPHANE OF TORLOISK.

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OF Scott's friends, Mrs Maclean Clephane and her three daughters, we should know nothing beyond the fact that they were accomplished women for whom Scott had a special affection, if it had not been for an accident of the weather and an act of graceful Highland hospitality in the year 1784.

Even before Scott had made his country the home of romance for all men and nations who loved poetry or read novels, the eyes of Europe had been curiously attracted to the wilder, wetter, more solitary part of Scotland, and that precisely by reason of its desolation, its mist and clouds, its vast solitudes. The imagination of educated Europe was sated with the familiar and the civilised. In the last decades of the eighteenth century the recovery of the primitive, the discovery of the sublime, haunted her like a passion. Two objects attracted pilgrims to the West Highlands. From a stormy sea among the rain-clouds of the Atlantic rose the island of Staffa; out of an obscure past, shrouded in strange imagery and an uncouth tongue, rose the mysterious figure of the poet Ossian.

The imagination of Europe was captivated. The Ossianic cult became an intellectual fashion everywhere; as early as 1772 Goethe was reading Ossian as well as Shakespeare to Frederika at Sesenheim. A year or

two later the young Werther, to soothe his sorrows, translated the song of Selma. A generation later the cult was influencing the fashion of ladies' dress; Parisian milliners recommended feathers as calculated to lend the wearer "quelque chose de poétique, d'Ossianique."

Meantime travelling carriages passed along the one beaten road by Loch Lomond up Glen Croe, across Loch Fyne by boat to Inveraray, and so on to Oban and the Western Isles; and enthusiasts put up with wet weather, rough roads, and dirty crowded inns. Along this route came in 1784 the distinguished French geologist, M. Faujas de St Fond. Staffa was his goal and geological investigation his object, but it was not with indifference that he approached the hills of Morven. When his travelling carriage in the darkness missed the road and at length a venerable man with a white beard appeared from a neighbouring mill, the incident appeared truly Ossianic to the sympathetic Frenchman. By a miscalculation he had put off his expedition to the Hebrides as late as Boswell and Johnson their tour ten years earlier. It was the last week in September when he reached Tobermory. His companions, an Italian count and a young American enthusiast, Thornton by name, pushed at once across to the west coast of Mull to Torloisk, the house of Mr Maclean, a hospitable laird. M. de St Fond counted the cost, and decided that to miss seeing Staffa was to give up the chance of a lifetime. A young officer, a Mr Macdonald, bound for Skye, hearing of his project, offered himself as companion. He retired for a short interval and emerged in complete Highland costume, to the delight of the romantic Frenchman and the proud satisfaction of the two gillies who were their guides across the island. The roads or lack of roads were just the same as we find in Johnson's 'Tour to the Hebrides.' Starting for an eight miles' ride at four in the afternoon, it was eleven and pitch dark before they saw the lights of a considerable house

standing on a bare rising ground looking out on the Western sea. Outside, darkness and bogs, rough stones and weather impeding their way; inside, light and warmth, an eager welcome, the laird hurrying to receive a guest already looked for for several days, and behind a company of gaily dressed young people, and a girl at the spinnet playing the Italian music then in vogue. This was Miss Maclean, the lively and accomplished daughter and heiress of the house.

It was M. de St Fond's first experience of a Highland household, though not of Highland hospitality. At Inveraray he had been the guest of the Duke of Argyle and the beautiful Duchess, but there the style of living and luxury had in nowise differed from the state of any other great house, English or Lowland. Here at Torloisk the maids wore tartan skirts and print short-gowns, and neither shoes nor stockings on their feet, the men the Highland philabeg; the meals, amply hospitable, were from the produce of the estate, except the tea, coffee, rum, and ship's biscuits, that came from Glasgow. At breakfast M. de St Fond made acquaintance with a "*soupe d'avoine*" eaten with "*cuillerées de crème*," and with blaeberry jam, and grouse and other Highland dainties. That black currants were the only other fruit mentioned is not surprising when we learn that to shelter it from the weather the kitchen garden was actually quarried out of the rock. Close by stood a small one-storied cottage with but two windows and a thatched roof, empty and a blot on the place; but his host told M. de St Fond with some emotion that it was the home of his race, the very house in which he had been born, and that nothing would induce him to pull it down. Yet this gentleman was, as M. de St Fond goes on to remark, a man of birth and wealth, who had served his country and passed many years in India. With all his heart the Frenchman praised the laird for choosing to live on his own

land in this remote spot. He had time to become acquainted with the family, for all the next day it rained and blew, and considerable anxiety was felt for Mr Thornton and the Italian count, who in their eagerness had started the day before for Staffa. On the third day the storm had abated, and by midday the wanderers landed from their boat. Wet, hunger, weariness had been more easily endured than the evil experience they had had of vermin in the solitary hut of the only too hospitable dwellers on the island.

In the evening, however, with fresh toilets the travellers were again all animation. The genial Frenchman entered light-heartedly into the gaiety of the Highland party. It pleased his French gallantry that the ladies remained at table after dinner to share the toasts and the fun: it tried his French abstemiousness when a large ten o'clock supper followed a large five o'clock dinner. With the charming daughter of the house he had much conversation. She was an authority on Highland music and Gaelic songs. She assured M. de St Fond that no one familiar with Gaelic poetry and tradition could doubt the authenticity of Macpherson's translations. M. de St Fond begged her to write a book on the subject. One cannot take farewell of the party without recording with pleasure that on one of those still, warm, golden days which occasionally visit the Western Islands late in the autumn, M. de St Fond made out his visit to Staffa, measured and marvelled over the wonderful structure, exchanged more distant civilities with the natives, and returned well satisfied in the evening, the boatmen singing Gaelic songs in tune with their oars.

Fifteen years later, Emilie Harmes, an enthusiastic German lady, a friend of Herder and Richter, plumed herself on being the first of her countrywomen to visit the land of "the venerated bard," the mysterious Ossian. A visit to Staffa was to be the crowning

point of this romantic pilgrimage, but from stress of weather the friend—a Reverend Mr Macdonald, who was to have been Frau Harmes' escort on the expedition—failed to appear. Frau Harmes had read M. de St Fond's travels. To her fervid imagination things read had all the vividness of personal experiences. She had for years been haunted by the picture of this lonely house looking out on the grey Atlantic and on Staffa, the mysterious islet. Here if anywhere she might hope to find patriarchal simplicity of life combined with nobility of sentiment and the culture of the Arts,—an ideal which possessed the best minds at the end of the eighteenth century. Stranded in her little inn at Tobermory, the idea of presenting herself at Torloisk on the simple plea of being a foreigner and a lover of Ossian appealed to her enthusiastic fancy. She recalled the picture of the charming daughter of the house as M. de St Fond had depicted her. With the image of the "Hebridean Muse" came, however, the damping reflection that M. de St Fond's journey dated sixteen years back, and that Miss Maclean, as Frau Harmes had learnt in Edinburgh, had married a Fife laird, a Mr Clephane. It was very doubtful if she would be at her Highland home, so with a sigh Frau Harmes gave up her scheme, and we lose the pleasure of comparing M. de St Fond's picture of this delightful Highland family with the impression made on a German lady of equal sense and sensibility. When next we hear of the heiress of Torloisk she is a widow living on her paternal estate.

How or when Mrs Maclean Clephane first became a friend of Walter Scott's we are not told. The first time she is mentioned in Lockhart's 'Life' is in 1810, when Scott, Mrs Scott, and Sophia were paying a visit to the Laird of Staffa. The island of Ulva, where Sir Reginald Macdonald received his guests, lies within easy distance of Torloisk on the island of



Mull. It is startling to find Scott congratulating himself on the fact that his "accomplished friends, the Clephanes," were not in the country at the time. The explanation lies in the surnames—*Macdonald* and *Maclean*.

The sixteenth century had seen reciprocal acts of violence and treachery between the clans, and the feud, smouldering on for two centuries, sufficed at the beginning of the nineteenth to keep apart two amiable and reasonable households, "living almost within sight of one another on an island where polished conversation cannot be supposed to abound." Scott might affect regret, but the romance of the situation appealed to his historic imagination. Still it was fated to embarrass him every time he set foot on the island.

In the summer of 1814 — the 'Waverley' year — Scott made his tour through the Orcades and Hebrides with the Commissioners of Northern Lights.<sup>1</sup> During this tour he kept a Journal which is to the novels what a great master's pencil studies and sketches are to his finished pictures. His descriptions—even the more lengthy—have that romantic suggestion which is the charm of Scott's prose style: they abound in those minute vivid touches which argue a writer's delight in his own narration.

A reader with any experience of the wetness of the West Coast in the month of August will feel slowly saturated as he reads how, on the evening of the 30th, Scott and Erskine, with a heavy mist on the land and a drizzling rain on the sea, rowed from the yacht, at anchor in Loch Tua, and crept along the shore, peering through the haze to where Torloisk ought to be. "At length, espying a cart-road, . . . we went ashore under

<sup>1</sup> This tour has a new significance for our generation as being the one link between Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. The Lighthouse Inspector, Robert Stevenson, for whom Scott expresses so much respect, was the grandfather of whom R. L. S. was so proud.



a drizzling rain. This was soon a matter of little consequence, for the necessity of crossing a swollen brook wetted me considerably, and Erskine, whose foot slipped, most completely. In wet and weary plight we reached the house after a walk of a mile in darkness, dirt, and rain; and it is hardly necessary to say that the pleasure of seeing our friends soon banished all recollection of our unpleasant journey."

The friendly hostess and her daughters were eager to keep the whole yachting party, and Scott — just beginning to sow his own acorns at Abbotsford — would have been agreeably entertained inspecting his hostess' plantations and improvements, the three musical daughters and their mother would have sung and played and told Celtic legends, and Erskine would have read Scott's poems aloud, and the rain might have rained its worst. But time pressed, and the party took leave of the hospitable ladies at midday.

Going on board, they learned that "Staffa" (Sir Reginald Macdonald) had arrived at his house at Ulva! Here was a dilemma. How run into the enemy's bay almost under the very windows of Torloisk? How pass the threshold of an intimate friend without even asking for his welfare? The only policy was to ignore and to head the yacht out to sea.

Of the eldest daughter, Margaret Maclean Clephane, Lockhart says that she was one of Scott's dearest friends. Like every one who knew him intimately, she seemed to hear the very sound of his voice in the pages of 'Waverley.' Miss Grant of Rothiemurchus — the splenetic "Highland lady" — looked upon everything north of the Grampians as her own monopoly, and pours contempt on the Highland scenes in 'Waverley' as being untrue to fact. One listens with more respect to her criticism when one finds the same idea disturbing Margaret Maclean Clephane.

"But why did the author not make me his Highland

dragoman? Oh, Mr——whoever-you-are, you might have safely trusted M. M. C.”

Scott was destined to play a determining part in the destiny of this fine young creature. In 1813 Morritt introduced to Scott two young Englishmen, Lord Compton and Mr Pemberton, who were making the tour of Scotland. Scott furnished them with an introduction to Torloisk, as the place where they would find at their best the beauties of the West Coast, the music and poetry of the Celtic tradition, and the *fine fleur* of Highland breeding and hospitality. The result was that he had in the summer of 1815 to delay his visit to Paris that he might draw up the settlement of Margaret Maclean Clephane on her marriage with Lord Compton.

Sir Walter's solicitude for this interesting and charming woman was no less than he showed when Sophia Lockhart settled in London. He reopens a letter to Byron to add, “If you meet Lady Compton in society, pray be acquainted with her; it is worth while, for she is a very clever young woman, and skilled in legendary lore.”

They were a family of unusually accomplished women. In September 1827 Scott, forcing himself to take a holiday, travelled with Lady Compton to join her mother and sisters in Glasgow. “The journey was as pleasant as the kindness, wit, and accomplishment of my companion could make it. Lady Compton gives an admirable account of Rome and the various strange characters she has met in foreign parts.”

In the evening the reunited sisters and mother sang to please their old friend, doubtless the Jacobite and Gaelic airs so dear to them all. Anna Jane, one of the unmarried sisters, not only sang with “more taste and talent than half the people going with great reputations on their back,” but left with Sir Walter in MS. “a very clever comedy in the old style, which was very happily imitated.”

Later on we find Lady Compton coming to Abbotsford just as Sophia might have done, "bringing all the bairns with her."

Lady Compton—then Lady Northampton—died in 1830. She who had grown up in the west wind, the rush of the grey Atlantic, the cloud and fitful sunshine of Mull, sleeps under the vivid sunlight of Naples. Two years later, when Scott was in Italy, his mind was too worn out to receive new beauty and new impressions, but his heart turned wistfully to old affections. This is one of the latest entries in his Journal—

" ' Naples, thou art a gallant city,  
But thou hast been dearly bought.' "

"So is King Alphonso made to sum up the praises of this princely town with the losses he had sustained in making himself master of it. I looked on it with something of the same feeling, and I may adopt the same train of thought when I recall Lady Northampton, Lady Abercorn, and other friends much beloved who have met their death in or near this city."

IV.

MAKERS OF THE 'MINSTRELSY'

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INTRODUCTORY

JOHN LEYDEN

JOSEPH RITSON

ROBERT SURTEES OF MAINSFORTH

CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE

JAMES HOGG



## INTRODUCTORY.

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It may be claimed for the four volumes of the 'Border Minstrelsy' that there went more happiness to the making of them than to the making of any other book ever printed.

The editor, Walter Scott, was young and in the first dawn of his fame; the contributors, John Leyden, James Hogg, Robert Surtees, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, were all under thirty; the printer, James Ballantyne, was young—it was his first essay in book-printing; the most enterprising of young publishers, Archibald Constable, had a fourth share in the publication; and in one sense the subject of the book was young, though the charm of it lay in its being also very old.

It is one of the main differences between Science and Literature that Science is always pushing forward into new, untrodden worlds, and Literature is always turning back to retrace forgotten paths that lead to forsaken haunts of the human spirit. Chaucer knew this when he wrote—

“For out of the oldē fieldēs, as men saith,  
Cometh all this newē corn, from year to year;  
And out of oldē bookēs, in good faith,  
Cometh all this newē science that men lear.”

From the days when all Christendom found its ancestry in the Tale of Troy till now when we are laying



bare the very walls of Troy itself, the imagination of Europe has been at work reconstructing the shattered worlds of Greece and Rome. Each age in turn has reaped the old fields, but the corn of each has been of its own sowing. If we have in our own day a knowledge of antiquity as imaginative as it is scientific, we owe it to archæology and historical criticism, but far more to that quickening of the imagination due to the Romantic Revival—a movement which, in the first instance, was a distinct break with the classical tradition.

For by the middle of the eighteenth century the classical tradition had become thin and conventional, and poetry, confined to a limited criticism of life, had ceased to find new music in her pipes. It was because some new material, some fresh inspiration, was urgently needed, that the nations of Europe woke up almost simultaneously to the fact that each had a literature, obscure and fragmentary, but beautiful and distinctive, partly stored in folios and manuscripts, partly alive and vocal on the lips of shepherds and milkmaids. On the day when the Reverend Thomas Percy discovered the soiled folio MS. under the bureau of his friend, Mr Pitt of Shifnal, and saved it from the ravages of the housemaid,—on that day he unconsciously introduced a new influence into literature.

Percy's '*Reliques of Ancient Poetry*' had the best fortune that can befall a book. It fell into the hands of boys and young men, nay, into the nurseries of enlightened households such as that of the Tytlers of Woodhouselee, where little Patrick Tytler devoured it, lying on the floor with his heels in the air! In 1782 Walter Scott, then a boy of twelve, was with his relations at Kelso recovering from an illness and enjoying one of his fruitful spells of desultory reading and dreaming. He had procured, probably from the local library, a copy of Percy's '*Reliques*,' and, lying under the big

platanus-tree where the garden sloped to the Tweed, he read the sun down the sky, oblivious of meals and manners.

If much of the matter in the book had the charm of discovery for the reader, it was still more exciting to find how much was already familiar; for ballads had been beloved by Scott from the days when, a three-year-old baby, he had ruffled his grandfather's visitors by shouting lustily the fine opening lines of the Ballad of Hardyknute—

“Stately stepped he east the ha’,  
And stately stepped he west.  
Full seventy years he now had seen,  
With scarce seven years of rest.”

“One might as well try to speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is,” an exasperated visitor used to cry.

At ten he had begun to collect penny and halfpenny broadsheets,—for ballads, generally in corrupt, sentimentalised forms continued to be hawked about Edinburgh; and Leyden, who knew everything, delighted to trace echoes of old metrical Romances in ballads sung in the streets of Edinburgh.

The collector's instinct was awake as early as the creative impulse. In the days when he and Irvine spent the summer afternoons telling each other stories on Salisbury Crags, he would accompany his friend home and take down ballads from the singing of Mrs Irvine. Before he left the Art Classes at Edinburgh University at the age of fifteen he had filled five little note-books with the ballads he had picked up.

This passion for traditional literature was fed by all Scott's studies. Law encouraged antiquarian research; German gave access to new ballads and literature; love itself, there is reason to believe, sometimes borrowed the language of old ballads. In the preface to the edition of

the 'Minstrelsy,' written in 1831 when Scott was sixty, this sentence stands without comment or note: "I was much encouraged in these studies, because the interest was shared by another person." It was a strange but not an unnatural impulse which prompted Scott to make this dim allusion which few would notice and fewer could interpret, for all were dead to whom the romance of his youth was a living memory. Scott has elsewhere recorded his pleasure at the discovery that, despite his lameness, more than one pretty young woman "thought it worth her while to sit and talk with me hour after hour in a corner of the ball-room." Surely we are not rash in concluding that when "*la chère adorable*" was his companion, ballads formed at times the subject of conversation.

With such instincts Scott had been placed in the finest ballad country in the world. Even now, when the industrial revolution has done its worst, the air of the Border country is "full of ballad notes"; in Scott's youth the face of the country was unchanged from what it had been since Flodden. Only bridle-paths led through Liddesdale; moor and moss were unreclaimed; more than once Scott was to risk his neck riding through bogs and flooded fords. Every grey waste and dark peat-moss had its story of raiding and reiving, every upland stream its burden of lamentation for the dead or the deserted. At the end of the eighteenth century no gulf, industrial or educational, separated the country-folk from the wild deeds of their ancestors. Tradition, only two lives removed from the fact, told how the smith's daughter at Longtown remembered the chill morning when Buccleuch thrust his lance through her father's window, bidding him bestir himself and come down to strike off the gyves from Kinmont Willie.

For several consecutive autumns after he was called to the Bar, Scott made excursions into Liddesdale with Robert Shortreed, Sheriff of Roxburghshire, partly in

search of ballads and ruins and “auld nick-nackets,” partly to enjoy what his companion called “the queerness and the fun.” They rode joyously from the cot of some shepherd famous for possessing the real lilt of “Dick o’ the Cow,” to the manse of some learned minister, owner of an MS. collection of ballads, on to the jovial hospitality of some Charlie’s Hope. “Wherever he stopped how brawly he suited himsel’ to everybody. . . . He aye did as the lave did.” This was always Scott’s way, whether “the lave” were Border farmers at their field sports, or Edinburgh lawyers exchanging legal jests in the Parliament House, or London society doing honour to the new Scottish lion,—“he aye did as the lave did.”

But at the same time there was no period of his life when he could not have said of himself with truth what he once said in a rare moment of introspection, “My life has been a sort of dream, spent in chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies.” Even when, as Shortreed tells us, “there were not ten yards but we were laughing and roaring and singing,” he could slip at will into the dreamland which from childhood to old age stood always open to him. Some square peel tower on the slope of the hill, the broken cross prone by the burnside, some fragment of a ballad caught from a ewe-milker, were so many spells by which he could conjure up the old Border life which stirred in his blood and possessed his heart.

A curious result of this habit of living at once in the life about him and in the land of dreams was that, without effort of his own, everyday companions—his Border hosts, his brother lawyers, possibly the honest Sheriff-Substitute himself—entered into his study of imagination, and after many days reissued glorified as Dandie Dinmont, Counsellor Pleydell, and Macmorlan, Procurator-Fiscal.

The identification of Shortreed with Macmorlan requires a little special pleading.



Scott had a special delight in keeping up old home-spun friendships. Every year, at the time of the Kelso Assizes, he paid his visit to the Shortreeds, and the talk—in honest Lallans—turned on these old adventures, on neighbourly gossip, on the children of the two households and their prospects. Only once did a momentary shadow fall on Shortreed's proud satisfaction when some officious fool pointed out to him that he had been portrayed in 'Guy Mannering' as "the writer," and he had ingeniously concluded that his old friend had drawn him as Glossin!

The misunderstanding cleared away without coming to Scott's knowledge, and apparently without Shortreed's conjecturing that—the word "writer" being applicable to both—he had really been sketched as Macmorlan. There are points in that admirable figure—the hospitality, disinterestedness, and simplicity—over which Scott lingers with more pleasure and affection than the story actually requires.

Besides his own collections Scott had two MS. collections of ballads to draw on, well known now to all ballad-readers as Herd's MS. and Mrs Brown of Falkland's MS. Herd's preface to his collection of songs and ballads gives charming expression to that sensibility to the charm of old and simple things which was growing up in scattered places under the polished conventionality of the middle of the eighteenth century:—

"The characteristic excellence of Scottish poetry is a forcible and pathetic simplicity which at once lays strong hold on the affections, so that the heart itself may be considered as an instrument which the hand of the minstrel harmonises, touching all its strings in the most delicate and masterly manner." "Old Grey-Steill"—for so, in recognition alike of his studies and of his sterling character, his friends had nicknamed the romantic Writer to the Signet—handed

to Scott his collections of published and unpublished ballads. The other MS., Mrs Brown's of Falkland, he owed to the kindness of his friend Lord Woodhouselee.

We may admit the mortifying fact that the original contributions of women to literature are a negligible quantity if we can secure sufficient recognition of the claim that the preservation of our priceless popular literature—ballads and fairy tales—is due to the faithful memories and sympathetic imaginations of unlettered old women keeping the bairns quiet in a corner with the singing of ballads, the telling of old tales. The ultimate authority for all ballads and fairy tales is the recitation of some old woman.

In the short list of women who have added to the world's literary wealth we may look in vain for the names of Mrs Farquhar and Mrs Brown, yet who would give "Binnorie, O Binnorie" and "Fause Foodrage" for all the paper blotted by Mrs Hannah More or Miss Maria Edgeworth?

Mrs Farquhar was an excellent old lady who spent her life amid flocks and herds near the upper waters of the Dee in Aberdeenshire. In her later years she lived in Aberdeen, and there found her chief delight in repeating old songs and tales to the children of her kinsfolk. One of these, a girl of course, was blest with the same perception and the same strong memory as her aunt, and, in old age, became, in her turn, a centre of delight to old and young. By this time Percy's 'Reliques' had made interest in ballads general. At the request of William Tytler, a grandson of Mrs Brown wrote out ninety ballads from her dictation. The MS. passed into the hands of William Tytler's son, Lord Woodhouselee, whose love of literature was equalled by his generous interest in literary men. It must have been in the year 1799 or 1800 that he handed over the collection to Walter Scott.



Scott's first idea of a collection of ballads had been a small octavo, to be printed at Kelso by his friend James Ballantyne; but the young Borderer, John Leyden, who was to be his collaborator, scouted anything so modest. He had more than enough to fill such a volume in his own head, he truly averred.

## JOHN LEYDEN.

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IF Walter Scott was the special darling of that "meet nurse for a poetic child," the Border country, other lads were growing up within her bounds whose lives were as closely knit with her poetry and tradition. A son of the soil, John Leyden not only drew his wiry frame and indomitable character from peasant ancestors, but in their clay-floored houses found as good a culture as ever quickened imagination, fed the thirst for knowledge, and filled the heart with love of country. The eastern Border has always been more secular than the Whiggish west. Yet among the patriarchs of his native Teviotdale Leyden had known several shepherds who could repeat the better part of the Bible by heart. They were apt, he thought, to become polemical. Conversation round the hearth of the Leyden family does not seem to have been theological: on winter evenings songs and tales went round in great variety, and often of fine imaginative quality. Many of these tales were of long descent: Leyden was to find several of them in all essentials when he came to study French Fabliaux in D'Aussy Legrand's fine edition. When told round the fireside, local names and circumstances added point to the sly, scandalous humour of "The Poor Scholar" (the tale is familiar to most of us in Hans Andersen's version—"Big Klaus and Little Klaus"). The

Sexton of Cluny's horrid but lucrative adventure with a dead man gained a fearful interest when your own Teviotdale village was the scene of it.

Phrases in these old tales—"The Well o' the World's End," "The Cauld Well sae Wearie"—had for the boy Leyden a constant suggestion of further things that he longed to know: snatches of verse sung in children's games—

"Arthur Knight, he rade ane night  
Wi' gylten spurs and candlelight"—

ran in his head like fragments of a tale once known and half remembered. What a child loves he tries to imitate, and the rugged and undaunted—withal good-humoured—bearing with which Leyden later confronted the world was consciously modelled on the old type of Border moss-trooper.

Never had student harder fight for the elements of education. When cut off from school by the death of the schoolmaster, he turned his mind to acquiring all the legends and ballads of Teviotdale. It was told him once that a blacksmith's apprentice in a neighbouring village had a copy of the 'Arabian Nights.' It was a time of snow, but young Leyden started by daybreak for the forge, only to find that he must travel to a further village where the lad was now at work. He humbly begged to be allowed to read the book in the presence of the owner. This, in spirit of teasing, the smith refused, and, patient but importunate, Leyden hung all that winter's day about the forge, home and food forgotten in the quest. It touched even the dull heart of the young blacksmith, this single-minded passion, and at last Leyden stumbled home in the darkness, the legal possessor of the treasure. Haroun al Raschid has always been a mysterious figure beckoning the Western imagination Eastward. Eager readings by the light of the peat fire were, that winter, shaping Leyden's destiny.

The path to learning lay open in Scotland—perhaps it lies open everywhere—to all youths who are prepared to live on bread and water, to sleep little, and to pick up Wisdom at bookstalls or wherever else she may be crying in the streets.

At the University of Edinburgh, where the lot of most of his fellows was poverty, Leyden's was penury, but, to use Lockhart's noble words, "He had never been conscious that this could be a bar." Where all were ambitious, his ambition out-soared even the comprehension of most of his fellows, for wealth and position had no meaning for him except as they conduced to the pursuit of learning.

There was another side to the young Borderer's ambition which he made quite plain to his contemporaries. Feats of strength and deeds of daring appealed to an imagination nurtured on Border ballads.

"I've done nae ill, I'll tak' nae wrang,  
But back to Wamphray I will gang."

When Leyden hummed these lines below his breath it was the prelude to the day of battle.

In quad and class-room there were many shabby uncouth figures, but Leyden's appearance moved even the professor to a smile and the students to open laughter, till the former discovered in the Teviotdale lad a sound knowledge of Greek, and the mocking youths learned first the weight of Leyden's hand and next the warmth and simplicity of his heart. He was, in fact, a singular and genial cross between Kinmont Willie and Browning's Grammarian. Nothing that could be learnt offered a difficulty to Leyden. Frequenting every lecture-room, he picked up a smattering of every science. "Dash it, man," he would explain to those who hinted at the superficiality of such studies, "if you have the scaffolding ready you can run up the

building when you please." Foreign languages were but as so many hedges surrounding gardens wherein grew desirable fruits and flowers of literature, to obtain which hedge after hedge was scrambled over.

From the year 1795 Scott had been struck, in the pages of the 'Edinburgh Magazine,' by poems signed J. L. Translations as these were from all languages, including Greek, Icelandic, Arabic, Persian, there was something in most that spoke to a kindred ear of the Scottish Border.

A student of Leyden's order gravitates inevitably to the stalls and shops where old and curious books are to be picked up. He had the free run of a small shop in the High Street where Archibald Constable, an ambitious young bookseller, was advertised to sell "Scarce old Books." Unable to be a purchaser, Leyden read in the back shop on sufferance, often perched on a ladder balancing a folio in his hand—a trick Scott immortalised in *Dominie Sampson*. There he attracted the notice of another book-lover who frequented the shop as a buyer with as much constancy as Leyden did as a reader.

Richard Heber was a young Englishman of fortune, the most princely of book-buyers, the most generous of book-lenders. At this time he was looking out for any MSS. or books that would help his friend Scott in his search of ballads.

Years after this Lord Minto was to say of Leyden that never had so great a reader been so great a talker. In Constable's back shop the word "ballad" acted like a spell on the student to whom shyness was unknown, opening flood-gates of enthusiasm and special knowledge.

What he never learned was where to stop. He was already engaged in editing 'The Complaynt of Scotland' for one of Constable's beautiful quarto editions. Leyden, who, on the field of Bannockburn, confessed that if he had then and there met an Englishman he



would have knocked him down, heartily shared the patriotic views of the unknown author of the 'Complaynt'; the literary allusions in the work gave opportunities for his special studies. The lengthy "Introduction" is excellent reading but not good writing. It is a merit in an editor to have an eye for "plums," but Leyden's method is to introduce them in layers. He could not shorten a quotation, nor pass by anything curious or picturesque that had taken his fancy even if its connection with his subject was obvious only to himself. The wealth of illustration, the quotations from Haywood on the Blessed Heirarchie of Angels, Gervase of Tilbury, and other recondite authorities in the 'Border Minstrelsy,' are largely due to that "curious reading" which Scott declared "only Dr Leyden possessed." Fortunately Leyden only supplied the raw material: the singularly acceptable style of notes and introductions is Scott's.

Into the scheme of the 'Minstrelsy' Leyden flung himself headlong. It appealed to all his instincts,—to his love of his native country, to his frank delight in the display of knowledge that no one else possessed, above all to the warm and generous friendship which he quickly conceived for Walter Scott.

Even those who know nothing else about him, know the story of his walking between forty and fifty miles to obtain, from an old body in Teviotdale, the complete version of a ballad of which Scott had merely an interesting fragment. "Scott was sitting with some company after dinner when a sound was heard at a distance like the whistling of a tempest through the torn rigging of a vessel. The sounds increased as they advanced more near, and Leyden burst into the room chanting the desiderated ballad with enthusiastic gestures and all the energy of the 'saw-tones' of his voice."

So proud a spirit, so eccentric a personality, could only consent to enter fashionable society on his own terms. But one must pay a tribute to the geniality and sense



of humour of the Edinburgh world of that date which cordially accepted the animal spirits, the "spates" of learned talk, and the unmodified "Tivydale How" of John Leyden. One language alone this remarkable linguist refused to attempt. "Learn English!" he retorted on a well-meaning friend. "Never! It was trying to learn that language that spoilt my Scots."

The two leaders of society in Edinburgh, in the winter of 1801-02, were the celebrated Duchess of Gordon and Lady Charlotte Campbell, the lovely daughter of the lovelier Gunning.

The eccentric Duchess enjoyed a new sensation and was not fastidious about manners. Lady Charlotte, iridescent and sentimental, was a creature of impulse, but always of sympathetic impulse: herself a wit and dabbler in literature, she could overlook uncouthness in a man of genius. She was at this time the centre of a society so overflowing with poetry, painting, music, love, and philanthropy that, as "Monk" Lewis wrote to Moore, "The angels might come down and beg Lady Charlotte Campbell to take them to sup with us." In that society Leyden was content to describe himself as Lady Charlotte's dancing bear.

But neither friendship nor literary ambition, far less social toils, could hold the restless spirit of John Leyden. The remembrance of what his fellow-Borderer Mungo Park had achieved in Africa left him no rest. Fortunately India, and not Africa, was to be the field of his labours.

The omnipotent Lord Melville has been accused of "wishing to make India a colony of Scotland," and never has nepotism been more amply justified of her children. No place was vacant in the gift of the East India House at the time of Leyden's application more suitable than that of assistant-surgeon. To specialise in a new subject at six months' notice would have been an insuperable difficulty to most men, but was taken by Leyden

in his stride. He had run up his "scaffolding" in desultory visits to clinical lectures, and managed to qualify in the six months allowed. Scott claims for his friend that he was the first British traveller who ever sought India moved neither by the love of wealth nor of power, but solely by the wish of extending our knowledge of Oriental literature. Before he left for the East, Leyden had completed his long descriptive poem, "Scenes of Infancy." Those who are interested in the poet can read this poem and find noble lines here and there, and everywhere evidence of a pure and enthusiastic spirit, but it is only the "perfect word" that avails to carry the poetic message of one generation to the next, and the "perfect word" Leyden never paused to seek. The very genuineness of his feeling was against such research; to him no magic syllables could mean as much as the mere names Teviot and Tweed.

Most of Leyden's later writing is concerned with Oriental erudition, and is entombed in the Transactions of the Asiatic Society. There is, however, a curious little volume of 'Malay Tales,' collected and translated when Dr Leyden was recruiting from an illness. The tales are peculiar, now fantastic as the 'Arabian Nights,' now as bald as a chronicle. Everywhere they reflect the virtues, manners, and violence of barbarians; there were traits in them that to Leyden recalled old days on the Border. Take this story of a dark deed of treachery.

Two of the sultan's champions are fighting alone in the upper storey of a deserted house. One is weak from long imprisonment, and twice when his creese sticks in the wall his antagonist withholds his hand. When, however, the same accident occurs to the man of milder mood, and he pauses to straighten his creese, expecting a like courtesy, the feebler combatant leaps on him and stabs him in the back. Change the locale to the head of the turnpike stair in a Border peel, the weapons

to daggers, and the names to Scott and Elliot, and the story would read as naturally.

Eight crowded years of glorious life were to be Leyden's portion in India, years literally spent in "journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in labour and travail, in watchings,"—for learning has its heroisms as well as arms and religion. In those days when an able man was eligible for varied appointments in India, Leyden had more than one lucrative employment. After making a generous provision for the old parents at Denholm, all his money went in paying teachers of languages and buying rare manuscripts.

Wherever Leyden went, those who had perception recognised the simple friendliness of the man in spite of his frank preoccupation with his own pursuit. It was, however, a rare piece of good fortune that two of the most distinguished men in India at this time came from the same beloved Border country.

Eskdale lies across the hills from the higher reaches of the Teviot, and there John Malcolm, though sprung of a race of gentlemen, had attended the parish school, and had almost as austere a training in frugality and self-reliance as Leyden himself. He, too, had fought his way forward from the day when he had landed at Madras "Boy Malcolm," the youngest officer in the service, till the time when as Sir John Malcolm he was a distinguished member of the Government of India. The memories of Border places beloved by both, the music that lay in the mere sound of Border names, made Malcolm's conversation dearly welcome to Leyden, even when he was prostrated by severe illness.

"I once went to see him," writes Malcolm, "when he was very ill and had been confined to his bed for days; there were several gentlemen in the room. 'And what are they about on the Border?' he said. 'A curious circumstance,' I said, 'is stated in my letter;'

and I read him a passage which described the conduct of our volunteers on a fire being kindled by mistake on one of our beacons. This letter mentioned that the moment the blaze, which was the signal of invasion, was seen, the hillmen hastened to their rendezvous, and the men of Liddesdale swam the Liddel.

"They were assembled in six hours, and at break of day the party marched into Hawick, twenty miles off, to the Border tune of 'Wha daur meddle wi' me?'

"Leyden's countenance become animated, . . . and as I reached the close of my tale he sprang from his sick-bed and with strange melody, and stranger gesticulation, sang—'Wha daur meddle wi' me? wha daur meddle wi' me?'. Several who were present thought him raving in delirium." *They* might think what they pleased, but John Malcolm—with his handsome face aglow and his Scots voice faltering with emotion,—John Malcolm understood!

One cannot but grieve that Leyden did not live to read his friend Scott's description of this incident in the last chapter of 'The Antiquary,' and to declaim Edie Ochiltree's speech at the pitch of his "saw-tones."

Lord Minto, the Governor-General of India in Leyden's time, though a Borderer, had had a cosmopolitan upbringing, and had spent his life at Courts and in the conduct of State affairs. He could hardly fail to have that high-bred ease of manner which carries a man with grace and dignity into every society. But Lord Minto had, besides a courtesy of the heart, a sincere goodwill towards other men and a perception of their value,—qualities which make mere courtliness seem a common and mechanical matter. With Leyden he felt the tie of a common birthplace, and this the more readily because each month of his honourable exile was adding to his passionate longing for home, for the "haugh below Minto, and the ash-tree which had the Polar Star over it,"—places he was only to see



again in fond and fleeting dreams. To Leyden, as to Lord Minto, was to be denied the crowning reward of his labours, the prosperous return of the exile bringing his sheaves with him. Only in day-dreams was he, too, to know the tremulous joy of the old parents, the proud delight of generous friends, the ring of Walter Scott's welcome, the warmth of Walter Scott's hand.

In 1811, when Lord Minto started on the expedition by which we took Batavia, Dr Leyden accompanied him as one of the staff. But for Lord Minto's Scottish bonhomie and sense of humour, a man in his position—an elderly man, moreover, beginning to be tired—might have wearied of a shipmate of such loud discursive speech. He writes to Lady Minto: "Leyden has occasion for all the stores which application and memory can furnish to supply his tongue, which would dissipate a common store in a week. . . . You may be conceited about yourselves, my beautiful wife and daughters, but, with all my partiality, I must give it against you; you would appear absolutely silent in his company. . . . If he had been at Babel he would infallibly have learned all the languages there, but in the end they must all have merged in the 'Tivydale How,' for not a creature would *have got spoken* but himself."

The history of the attack and conquest of Batavia is well known. Lord Minto records with satisfaction that our troops abstained from all pillage, but there was one kind of booty which Leyden, for one, could never resist. In the search for manuscripts he plunged from the Eastern sunshine into the dank chilliness of a long-disused library. He had fought through many an attack of fever, but this time he felt as he left the vault that he had got his death-blow. In two days his worn-out frame had succumbed.

Scott could never speak of this friend of his early manhood without his eye softening and his voice faltering. It was fitting that his noble lines, inscribed to Leyden's

memory, should be in the most national of all his poems, 'The Lord of the Isles.' They occur in the passage descriptive of the Hebrides:—

"Scenes sung by him who sings no more!  
His bright and brief career is o'er,  
And mute his tuneful strains;  
Quench'd is his lamp of varied lore,  
That loved the light of song to pour;—  
A distant and a deadly shore  
Has Leyden's cold remains!"



## JOSEPH RITSON.

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IT was Walter Scott's fate, all through life, to excite affection in unexpected quarters. But neither the devotion of the silly hen nor of the little black pig at Abbotsford is more remarkable than the confidence and affection which he, a ballad-collector, excited in the self-appointed gadfly of all collectors and editors, Joseph Ritson. One would even strain a point to include this waspish little critic among "Sir Walter's friends,"—for in his agitated lifetime no one called Ritson friend,—but there is the authority of Scott's own words, written after Ritson's death, "I loved poor Ritson with all his singularities: he was always kind and indulgent to me."

For this venomous, indefatigable, and absolutely honest antiquary, this "scurrilous miscreant" who so terrorised Warton that he abstained from publishing for the last seven years of his life, this thorn in the flesh of the dignified Bishop of Dromore, this opponent who faced Pinkerton with a fury as shrill and intemperate as his own, this irreconcilable critic welcomed the 'Minstrelsy' with generous enthusiasm. On the appearance of the first volumes he wrote of Scott and Leyden to a correspondent: "I have two prodigious geniuses who are ready to give me every satisfaction." And to Scott himself, to whom he was introduced by George Ellis, he wrote: "There are no men in the world I am so desirous of seeing as Leyden

and yourself." Here at last were ballad-collectors after his own heart, to whom the authentic words as they found them were sacred, not because they approached them in the scientific spirit—that spirit was still unborn—but because the rough music, plain speech, and plaintive repetition of an old ballad were dearer to them than any artificial poetry. This attitude of mind, enthusiastic and not apologetic, was new in ballad-collectors. Herd, indeed, had been honest if uncritical in his collection, and his modest and beautiful little preface is full of the right feeling, and of Herd Ritson speaks respectfully. But towards Percy, the *doyen* of ballad-collectors, Ritson's attitude was one of angry defiance and mistrust. So great is the debt that the world owes to the Bishop of Dromore, that it is startling to find the reverend editor himself regarding his labours at once with the patronising pomposity of a prelate and the commercial spirit of a bookseller. Writing to Pinkerton in 1778, he says: "I only considered these things as pardonable among the levities—I had almost said follies—of my youth. I have taken up these trifles as other grave men have done cards, to unbend or amuse the mind." Nevertheless, he has the shrewdness to perceive the value of the collection as an asset for his son. The young man is to inherit the ballads as a sort of family business which may serve to "fill up the vacuities of his academic studies." With a fatuous exposure of his methods the bishop adds: "I neglect no opportunities of amending and enlarging them, and shall much improve them for him by this delay." And after this confession Percy still complains of Ritson's "wanton insults" and "unprovoked outrage." He could not understand the generous weakness of a man who could get into a paroxysm of rage at a breach of literary integrity.

In controversy, it must be confessed, Ritson claimed absolute licence of speech. "I abominate all refinements and restrictions," he writes, "and wish every one at full

liberty to adopt the language of Rabelais." As Pinkerton, while disagreeing in everything else, agreed on this fashion of conducting argument, their literary duel may take rank with that of Milton and Salmasius or of Dr Johnson and Adam Smith. The point at issue between them was the Gothic or Celtic origin of the Picts. The reader who wearily struggles through the first pages of the controversy is haunted by a sense of something heard before when he finds an important issue hinging on the name of a town, "called in the Pictish language Pean-vahel, meaning the head of a wall, from Pen, head, and vallum, a wall, which word both Picts and Britons had adopted from the Romans." Waking up, like Mr Lovel, from a perplexing reverie, he finds that he has all along been in the company of Sir Arthur Wardour and Mr Jonathan Oldbuck! This was always Scott's method: he kept the odds and ends that took his fancy for twice seven years in his memory, to find triumphant use for them at last. He could laugh whole-heartedly at these antiquarian problems just because they never lost their fascination for him.

It was probably in the summer of 1802 that Ritson paid his promised (or threatened) visit to Walter Scott at Lasswade. One may respect a man whose fury is excited by impersonal matters, scientific, historical, or even antiquarian, but such an one makes an uneasy guest: the most considerate host is unaware what innocent subject may lead to an explosion. To start with, Ritson had as violent a prejudice against Scotsmen as Dr Johnson. We are perhaps wrong in regarding Dr Johnson's sentiments as a humorous exaggeration; comparing them with utterances of Ritson's, one is driven to conclude that in the eighteenth century irritated contempt was the attitude of Englishmen to their proud and suspicious neighbours. It was not the least part of Scott's work to touch the imagination of England into sympathy with his own country.

If Ritson as an Englishman despised Scotsmen, as an antiquary he believed them all to be liars—"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,—I dread a Scotsman bringing ancient verse." Politics were likely to be a thorny subject in a Tory household, as Ritson professed Jacobinism, and was only restrained by fear of Botany Bay from addressing his friends as "citizens." To be sure, he combined his hatred of kings with fealty to Henry IX. as the last of the Stuarts, and romantic admiration of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Ritson was besides, from horror of animal suffering, a strict vegetarian, but this question of diet concerned only his kind hostess, Mrs Scott.

The visit passed off with perfect success. Scott had not only the patient courtesy of a host, but the humorist's pleasure in all marked individuality. Moreover, Ritson could bring out of his treasure-house the very things Scott best loved,—snatches of old satiric poetry, sung by Scottish girls in honour of Bannockburn, Court lyrics composed for Elizabeth, wife of Henry VII., the authentic version of the "Raid of Rookhope," which Ritson promised to send him but never did. Scott already acted on two golden maxims which he laid down later. One occurs in the delightful introduction to 'Quentin Durward': "I had learned—but it was several years after I had left the University of Edinburgh—that the real end of conversation is not victorious argument but to gain new information and ideas from one's interlocutor." Even more to the purpose is this that he puts into the mouth of Chrystal Croftangry: "I had long before learnt never to waste sense where nonsense answers the purpose equally."

It was more difficult to induce Leyden, whose good temper and hilarious spirits were quite unconnected with any sense of humour, to observe the same wise rule of conduct.

R. P. Gillies, in his little book, 'Recollections of Sir W.

Scott,' has given a lively picture of a collision between Scott's two eccentric guests. He represents Scott as dusting Leyden about the ears with a long feather brush,—a trick Scott may well have used as a "non-sense" argument. Unfortunately Gillies confesses in another place that the scene is compounded from various occasions, and delightful as it is, the account has little historical value. There certainly was a terrific explosion between Ritson and Leyden in London just before Leyden sailed for India. The Borderer had grown so impatient of poor Ritson's denunciations of animal food that—the Kinmont Willie element being uppermost in him at the moment—he sent to the kitchen for a raw beefsteak and ate it before the eyes of the horrified antiquary.

One must regret the loss of even one human affection in a life so denuded as poor Ritson's had become. In 1803 he writes to Scott: "I can hardly flatter myself with another pleasant and interesting visit to Lasswade." By the end of another year Ritson was dead, bankrupt—for he had speculated away all his means,—and in a madhouse.

The honour abides with Scott of remaining the poor antiquary's only friend, unless this gentle sentence of Robert Surtees' gives him a claim to share the title. Referring to Ritson's horror of animal food he writes: "I would rather share his prejudices than laugh at them."



## ROBERT SURTEES OF MAINSFORTH.

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AMONG the good gifts that the 'Border Minstrelsy' brought to its editor were interesting letters from unknown correspondents, now enclosing a penny broadsheet, now an additional verse of a ballad, now a letter challenging a phrase or an allusion. The most valuable of these communications reached Scott at Ashestiel late in the autumn of 1806. It bore the post-mark Durham, was dated Mainsforth, signed Robert Surtees, and contained minute historical notes on some of the ballads in the 'Minstrelsy.' This Northumbrian correspondent was a young man of about twenty-six, so wedded to old-fashioned, recluse ways that, though a young squire, he was already an old antiquary. He loved with gentle passion his hereditary acres, the woodland he had, as a boy, sown with columbines, the garden wall planted with single pinks; he loved the valleys and moors of his native country, the fine North Country names, the history of all its old families; he loved the Library, and more especially the Charter-chest, of the Chapter House of Durham; he loved his own old books and the monumental history of Durham at which he toiled all his days; he loved his familiar, often peculiar friends, the schoolboys who spent their holidays at Mainsforth, the schoolmasters who composed elegant Latin verses, the learned clergymen who wrote topographical monographs;



he loved one woman, at first hopelessly, romantically as her lover, then for years with absolute dependence on her, as her husband; he loved the Church of England, devoutly and sincerely accepting her teaching and her discipline,—and yet, when it came to ballads, this pious, honourable, single-minded gentleman had as little conscience as Shakespeare's Puck, if we can imagine Puck deserting moonbeams and woodlands for genealogies and marginalia.

It is unlikely that the post ever before or since delivered a packet so full of romantic matter as that which reached Scott in December 1806 from this singular correspondent. It contained, first, a spirited old ballad, a typical Northumbrian ballad, different from the swinging quatrain of the Scottish ballad—

“Hoot awa' lads, hoot awa',  
Ha' ye heard how the Riddleys and Thirlwalls and a'  
Ha' set upon Awbony Featherstonehaugh  
And taken his life at the Deadmanshaugh?”

This, so Surtees averred, had been taken down from the recitation of an old woman of eighty on Alston Moor, who, as girl, “had heard it sung at merry-makings till the roof rang again.”

A still greater find was a curious piece of mediæval Latin, the work, Surtees surmised, of a monk of Durham, telling an eerie tale of an English knight hunting on the Scottish Border who, encountering a stranger on horseback, was overthrown by the same, and then miraculously restored whole and sound by the mysterious agency of his adversary. Fantastic as the tale is, it yields in singularity to the story Surtees tells of the finding of it. An antiquarian friend, a Mr Gylle, given to annotating his books, had lent him a copy of an old book, ‘Burthogge on the Nature of Spirits,’ and on a loose interleaved page, in the handwriting of a far older day, was this strange extract which had so deeply impressed Surtees’

imagination that he had been at the pains of transcribing it.

On Mr Gylle's death this book, with others, was put aside for Mr Surtees at Sotheby's sale, but when the new owner went eagerly to find the extract, it was gone—had fallen out at the sale, and was lost beyond recovery!

Commenting gravely on the tale of the "Elfin Knight," Surtees writes: "At any rate, it is a curious case of glamour." It is indeed—of "glamour" cast by Robert Surtees over Walter Scott! The ballad, the Latin tale, and the story of the lost manuscript are all alike figments of Surtees' brain! Still, the contents of the packet were not exhausted. Scott found further a ringing verse purporting to be part of a Jacobite song, "Lord Derwent-water's Good-night."

"Farewell, farewell, George Collingwood,  
Since fate has put us down.  
If thou and I have lost our lives,  
King James has lost his crown."

Finally Surtees communicates a piece of heraldry so fantastic that it *may* have been calculated to arouse Scott's suspicions and lead to the whole fabric dissolving in laughter.

The event was very far from that. Scott, like all great creators, acted on Molière's principle: "Je prend mon bien où je le trouve." At this moment he was simmering over his Tale of Flodden Field, and saw at once the use to be made of the new treasures. "Albany Featherstonehaugh," introduced as the song of a minstrel, would make excellent decoration, illustrating the age and locality, while the "Elfin Knight" was to become the very pivot on which the story of 'Marmion' hinges.

It was a curious characteristic of the genius of Surtees—for the touch of genius was certainly there—that it only found adequate utterance under the guise of imposture.

It was the freakish device of a modest and sensitive mind, conscious of the beauty of its own inspirations.

In 1809, when Scott was preparing a third edition of the '*Border Minstrelsy*,' Surtees sent him a ballad fragment taken down, so he declared, from the recitation of Anne Douglas, an old crone who weeded in his garden.

Both Scott and Leyden had written ballads, and if we forget for a while "*Clerk Saunders*" and the "*Douglas Tragedy*," we can find something to admire in the "*Eve of St John*" and the "*Ballad of Lord Soulis*," but we merely lend our minds to the beauties of these poems; with the first line of "*Bertram's Dirge*" the mind is taken captive:—

"They shot him at the Nine Stane Rig,  
Beside the Headless Cross."

This is obviously no ancient ballad. It is merely a beautiful poem which, for fulness of romantic suggestion in fewest words, may stand just behind Coleridge's "*Sir Arthur O'Kellyn*":—

"Where is the grave of Sir Arthur O'Kellyn?  
Where may the grave of that good knight be?"

Surtees must have been a little taken aback when Scott, in writing to thank him for "the most beautiful fragment he had seen for many a long day," identified the Nine Stane Rig with a stream near the Hermitage, and told the incident of the finding of the prostrate cross in the unnamed glen in Liddesdale. To stop further inquiries Surtees had to kill off his old chauntress.

The question here forces itself on one, How far Scott was the unconscious, how far the willing victim of Surtees' imposture? His cynical friend, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, used in this connection to say significantly, "Walter knows a hawk from a hernshaw." Scott's primary interest was in beautiful song or story. As the last minstrel, perhaps, he claimed the same right as his predecessors to add new cloth to the old garment.

But the delicate patchings of Scott and other collectors are nothing to the wholesale creations of Surtees.

Even when his heart was inly stirred, it was in ballad form that he found most natural expression. His happy married life had not been crowned by children, but a bright young sister-in-law had supplied a daughter's place to him. She died early, and neither mother nor sister mourned her more tenderly than her brother-in-law.

Who that has left his dead in the darkness of the grave but has been haunted by the thought of them lying chill and lonely under inclement skies? The old sad verses of "Clerk Saunders" rhymed on in Surtees' brain in the first blank days of bereavement, and his sorrow appropriated their music:—

“ ‘Is there any room at your head, Emma?  
Is there any room at your feet?  
Is there any room at your side, Emma,  
Where I may sleep so sweet?’

‘There's no room at my head, Robin,  
There's no room at my feet.  
My bed is dark and narrow now,  
But oh! my sleep is sweet.

‘I've often sat by your fire, Robin,  
I've often sat on your knee;  
Your ingle bright will blaze this night,  
But it will not blaze for me.’”

As was the case with several of his correspondents, the friendship with Scott was the most romantic circumstance in Surtees' placid life. It would be difficult to imagine days made up of simpler and gentler elements than his. He divided his interest between his paternal acres and his history of Durham. He was a practical, useful country gentleman as well as a laborious absent-minded antiquary. His love of old books and new flowers affords a pretty anecdote. When the dahlia was

first introduced into his garden he was delighted to find what he believed to be an exact description of the flower in a mediæval romance.

In Surtees' pleasant humdrum existence, incidents, humorous or pathetic, were furnished by journeys made in stage-coaches with brother antiquaries to visit places of interest. On one such occasion Raine, his biographer, was his companion. "Late one afternoon a lady in the coach began to talk. She said that she was on her way from Edinburgh, that she knew Scott quite well, that he was not lame at all, with other unfounded details. Night fell and there was a general silence." "Raine, are you asleep?" "No." "Is she asleep?" "I don't think so." "Oh man! get her to tell us some more lies."

Another little story might be appended to Lamb's "Essay on Modern Gallantry." The coach had arrived at York at midnight, and a passenger, a young servant girl, anxiously inquired her way to Accombe, where she was to find a dying friend. The place was at some distance; the girl neither knew her way nor had money to pay her guide. "Surtees witnessed her distress, and pitied her with all his heart." He knew the way, and, silently taking her arm in his, walked off with her into the darkness.

It is characteristic of Surtees that his courtesies are most pleasing when they have a fine edge of gratuitous falsehood. Once, at a party, a foolish gentleman "but kind-hearted, and of the most unassuming manners and charitable to the poor," anxious to contribute to the literary conversation going on, declared "that he really could not make up his mind to believe the whole of 'Gulliver's Travels.'" "Surtees, by a single beseeching look, checked the roar of laughter. 'I cannot help your unbelief, sir,' said he quietly, addressing the gentleman without even a smile, 'but I, for my part, believe every word of it.'"

It was a great event in the life of the two antiquaries



when, in 1819, Surtees carried off Raine for a visit to Scotland. Scott was not in Edinburgh, but James Hogg gleefully constituted himself their guide and friend, "amusing us," Raine adds slyly, "with the history of himself." It was hot July weather, and the Shepherd, in his "maud," insisted on walking arm-in-arm with his new friends along Princes Street, old-fashioned punctilio stifling resistance on their parts. Warm was the welcome that greeted the travellers at Abbotsford. Such old-fashioned pilgrims with "the rust of antiquarianism" on them were guests after Scott's own heart. He showed them all his treasures, and it was a shy satisfaction to Raine to add to these. On his way North, a friend had given him a volume of black-letter ballads—the sort of thing an antiquary would generally be as reluctant to part with as with life itself,—but the pleasure of giving Scott pleasure was not to be resisted. "The book that had been mine for so short a time instantly became Scott's."

The last meeting between Scott and Surtees occurred, of all unlikely places, in a ball-room. In 1827 Scott, reluctantly allowing himself a holiday from 'Napoleon,' took part in the festivities in Durham in honour of the Duke of Wellington.

He was himself almost as great a lion as the Duke, and Sir Walter always felt it due to his entertainers to play the part assigned to him. Surtees had absented himself from the public dinner—his shyness taking alarm at the possibility of having to make a speech,—but on the chance of waylaying Scott, he faced the more impersonal terrors of a ball-room. "Scott had just entered the passage leading into the room from the street when a gentle hand was laid on his shoulder from behind, and two lines from an old ballad were whispered in his ear. 'That must be my Surtees,' said Scott, even before he had time to look round him." The two old gentlemen retired into the ladies' cloak-room and



pleasantly discussed their "antiquarian old-womanries," as Scott called his favourite subject of conversation. When they had talked a good hour Sir Walter asked Surtees to accompany him into the ball-room, and Surtees replied that he was "not in the habit of going to balls, but for the pleasure of entering with Scott he would go."

In a poem addressed to Sir Cuthbert Sharp, the kind host on this occasion, Sir Walter refers pleasantly to this incident: "Can I . . .

"Forget your kindness found for all room  
In what, though large, seemed still a small room?  
Forget my Surtees in a ball-room?  
Forget you? No!"

Surtees lived to hear of the death of Scott: he said little the morning the news came, but walked pensively up and down his lawn, and for some days after was sad and abstracted in his mood.

Two years later his own call came. Life that he had tasted so temperately was pleasant to Surtees. There were many things he was reluctant to leave. The last time he left his library he looked wistfully round: "Annie, I shall never be here again; these books will be yours." As he lay in his upper chamber the spring sunshine was broadening on the fields he loved. That was a still keener regret. "I shall never more see the peach-blossom nor the flowers of spring. It is hard to die in the spring."

## CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE.

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IN 1797 Walter Scott's best energies were given to the Edinburgh Light Horse. When, wearied but satisfied with the day's exertion, he used to return to his father's house, 25 George Square, an imp of a boy from a neighbouring window derided him because, forsooth, he was lame, and, being lame, was full of martial ardour. "I remember seeing from the window Walter limping home in a cavalry uniform, the most grotesque spectacle that can be conceived." So Sharpe told the story in days long after his friend was dead.

There is one misfortune greater than having no sense of the ludicrous,—seeing nothing but the ludicrous. "I believe you could not help laughing," said George Heriot to Sir Mungo Malagrowther, "if your best friend lay dying." And the character of Sir Mungo was, it has been supposed, suggested by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe.

A biting sense of the absurd, an irresistible attraction towards what is curious, morbid, entertaining, scandalous in history and literature, and a leaning towards gossip and fashion in social life, were all tendencies which withdrew Sharpe from serious life, from sympathy with common men, from the greatest literature, but they left him wit, a lively fancy, an excellent knowledge of genealogy and anecdotal history, a singular mastery of pencil and burin, some family affection, some good friends.

He himself held that the most interesting thing about a man was his pedigree: his own stands for much among the influences that shaped his life. His surname of Sharpe came by the accident of inheritance. His grandfather, a Kirkpatrick of Closeburne, took the name on inheriting the estate of Hoddam in Annandale. Both Sharpes and Kirkpatricks were high Tories. Two Sharpes were "out in the '15"; a Kirkpatrick had ridden at Grierson of Lag's bridle-rein in the bad old "killing times"; intermarriage or hereditary friendship connected the Kirkpatrick Sharpes with such persecuting families as the Jardines of Applegarth, the Griersons of Lag, the Maxwells of Springkell. Those who are active in repressing popular or national movements entail by perfectly natural consequence a sense of alienation on their descendants for more than one generation. High Tory as he was, Sir Walter knew the value of having ancestors who had been "outed for a persecuted covenant," as well as ancestors who had let their beards grow in sorrow for an exiled king. No phase of Scottish life was beyond his comprehension—sympathetic or humorous, generally both,—till indeed it came to Radical weavers in Hawick and Jedburgh.

Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe spent all his youth in Annandale. He loved every stone in the grey crumbling walls of Hoddam Castle, loved the Square Tower on the slope above the house with its mysterious inscription "Repentance," loved gardens and "policy,"—himself planning the wallflower walk; but for the peasantry and the outdoor servants on the place he has no word of kindness or respect. The gross, the scandalous, the sordid side of the rustic life of Scotland was all he looked for; yet we know the type of men who lived on the land and were "kindly tenants" on the Hoddam estate. Carlyle's forbears had been settled for generations in the neighbourhood, though it was only in 1814 that his father, James Carlyle, became a tenant of the

Sharpe family at Mainhill. At a later period, on a disagreement with General Sharpe, Charles's brother, old Carlyle dismissed his landlord from any jurisdiction over his peace of mind with the curt remark—"We can live without Sharpe and the whole Sharpe creation." This probably summed up pretty accurately the Annandale view of the family at the Castle.

On his mother's side Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe was descended from Susanna, the beautiful Countess of Eglinton who, at the age of ninety, captivated Dr Johnson by her "high-bred manners, wide reading, and elegant conversation." By this hereditary beauty and charm her grand-daughter, Eleanore Renton, Mrs Kirkpatrick Sharpe, captivated and held fast the heart and imagination of her son Charles. "You are my only treasure, my consolation in all the changes and chances to which mortality is heir," he writes to her from Oxford.

Gossip, derision of neighbours, jokes in the coarser fashion of an elder day, might be the staple of correspondence between Oxford and Hoddam, but at least everything was frankly shared between son and mother. His mother's high-breeding and feminine grace gratified the two strongest instincts in Charles—his pride of birth and love of beauty. There is a drawing of her from his brush. The tall, slight figure moves, in flowing skirts, almost as lightly as the clouds in the background of summer sky. One slender hand holds a feather fan, a soft ruffle frames the small delicate face and curling locks. As a drawing the portrait is charming, despite the fact that the proportion in the figure and character in the face have been sacrificed to an exaggerated air of high-breeding: it is probably unique as the impression made by a mother on the imagination of her seventh child, a son of over twenty.

In one respect Sharpe's youth resembled Walter Scott's: he was a ballad-collector from the day when

he took down "The Douglas Tragedy" from the singing of a nursery-maid and wrote it out in half-text. There were milkmaids in the byres at Hoddam; tenants' daughters in Annandale, by immemorial habit, gave "the Leddy" stated days of spinning; an itinerant tailor came every year to the Castle to make ill-fitting garments for children and servants: from all these authorities Charles picked up ballads and songs, often only fragments. When the first volume of the 'Minstrelsy' appeared he wrote to Scott and sent him the version of "The Douglas Tragedy" actually used in the 'Minstrelsy,' a version of the "Queen's Maries" slightly different from the one Scott prints, and a priceless treasure, quite new to Scott, "The Twa Corbies." This, Sharpe's cousin, Miss Erskine of Alva, had written down from "the recitation of an old woman"—the universal authority. A fourth contribution was the beautiful, fragmentary ballad of "Lady Anne," the unfortunate lady who slew a new-born infant and then saw him, "a bonnie boy," singing and "playing at the ba'" with Peter and Paul. This he had copied from an old magazine. Of the genuineness of Sharpe's contributions the best proof is the tawdry and conventional quality of his own poems, two of which appear in the fourth volume of the 'Minstrelsy.' He gave Scott the best of his collection. Later he himself published a small separate collection of just such ballads and songs as Burns redeemed from corruption into incorruptibility, as Scott was content to leave in the privacy of his volumes of MS. Ballads, as the peasant modesty of Leyden and Hogg would have "thought shame" to offer to the public.

Sharpe was destined for the Church, and in 1798 went up to Christ Church. In one of his letters he describes the place as "so full of noblemen at present that one's eyes require green spectacles to preserve them from the glare of the golden tufts among these peers. At Oxford he followed undisturbed the bent of his own



genius. He ransacked the libraries, instinctively picking out historical memoirs, chiefly of the Stuart period, some in MS., some in obscure publications.

At one time he was attracted to the idea of writing the Life of the Duke of Monmouth, a character for whom he confesses a "womanish fondness." Again he is drawn to Claverhouse, and noble families among his friends and kinsfolk rummage their family charter-chests for letters and memoirs. On either of these subjects he might have produced an unusual and indeed fascinating work, for though entirely incapable of large historical views—he complains that "such events as the Reformation, Revolution, and Union make me very uncomfortable"—no personal trait, no picturesque detail, no shadow of scandal, no crumb of gossip, would have escaped his search.

But the pen was not to be Sharpe's characteristic implement. His distinction rests on his drawing, and already at Oxford he had complete mastery of his pencil. The extreme elegance and high-breeding of his friends as he portrays them—with the usual sacrifice of anatomical proportion—partly reflect the fashion of the time, but are largely due to the value the artist placed on such characteristics.

The set with which Sharpe consorted did not court the society of the tutors. In 1812, writing to one who had been at college with him, he says: "Things are much altered at Christ Church if tutors are admitted to the society of noblemen. The tufted set of my youth never thought, *Dieu merci!* of such a thing. Their presence would have turned our wine and tea into tears, . . . and our nobles did not like unpolished gems." It is difficult to recognise the Oxford of these later times in the life reflected in Sharpe's letters from Christ Church. The river is never mentioned. Those young gentlemen in silk stockings, pumps, muslin cravats, and fine blue coats did not row nor play



games. It is odd that, though both an artist and antiquary, Sharpe never refers to the beauty of Oxford.

It is evident that he was the reigning wit in his circle. All his correspondents danced to his piping. To most of these young gentlemen one feels inclined to address the objurgation with which Carlyle adjured the world at large: "Above all things, oh be not witty." One of them admits the burden of the obligation. "It is the most difficult thing in the world to sit down with a determination of being witty. I have already made five unsuccessful attempts to answer your letter in that strain."

A pleasant exception to the prevailing echoes of Sharpe's shrill laughter are the letters of Lord Gower, which are full of kindness, sense, and genuine interests. His mother, the "great Lady of the Cat," the feudal chieftainess, the Countess-Duchess of Sutherland, was Sharpe's most interesting and kindest correspondent. She discovered and had printed some invaluable family histories, and Sharpe's minute knowledge of history, bibliography, and portraiture made him a useful authority to consult. His curious—and indeed unique—stores of knowledge were at all times at the service of those who could make use of them. Chambers' 'Traditions of Edinburgh' and Wilson's 'Memorials of Edinburgh' were largely made up of picturesque materials generously poured out by this cranky antiquary.

It was a common interest in "auld nick-nackets," ballads, broadsheets, trials for witchcraft, armorial bearings, and "histories marvail pleasant of frail Countesses"—as Surtees describes them—that were the bond between Sharpe and Scott. On Sharpe's side cordiality was always reluctant and intermittent. When Scott visited Oxford in 1803 under Heber's auspices, Sharpe makes a merit of having entertained him. "I very courteously invited him to breakfast. He is dreadfully lame, and much too poetical. He spouts without mercy,

and pays highflown compliments." Scott did, as we all know, habitually overrate his contemporaries. To Scott's troublesome invitation to visit him at Lasswade Sharpe had replied with polite evasion. "I do think a little fib of this kind is a very venial sin." Since such were his views, one is relieved that he never was Scott's guest either at Lasswade or Abbotsford, and that he never accepted this alluring invitation from the gentle Surtees: "You shall have a warm room, a sunny garden, and perfect freedom in all things lawful."

In regard to another poet Sharpe is not to be blamed that he had no prescience of the question of posterity—"And did you once see Shelley plain?" His description of Shelley's style, "Moore burlesqued," was perhaps the current dictum of clever young Oxford; while "that wicked wretch, Mr Shelley, . . . mad, bad, . . . and trying to persuade people that he lived on arsenic and aquafortis," echoes the views of the authorities. In 1811 Shelley turned up in Edinburgh with a friend, Mr Hutchinson. Sharpe took them to a party in Heriot Row with the introduction—"They are both very gentlemanly persons, and dance quadrilles eternally."

Sharpe never took orders. Either a patron was lacking or persistent disinclination took the place of decision. While his father lived he stayed on at Hoddam nursing a constant toothache over fires that constantly smoked. After his father's death he and his mother set up house together in 93 Princes Street. His health was indifferent, and a lawsuit with his brother concerning entails and jointures was a worse source of disquiet than the smoky chimneys of the old house he had left.

In Edinburgh he haunted picture-dealers. The mornings he spent with old books, picking up the scandals of forgotten generations; his evenings he gave to society, enjoying the article fresh and crude. "Strange," writes Scott in his *Journal*, "that a man should be curious after scandal centuries old! Not but Charles loves it fresh and

fresh also. . . . He is always master of the reigning report, and he tells the anecdote with such gusto that there is no helping sympathising with him." It was as if the soul of Sharpe had inhabited the persons of successive maiden ladies of quality for at least two centuries, and had retained the tittle-tattle hoarded up by each.

In December 1816 Scott writes to the Duke of Buccleuch: "Charles Sharpe projects the publication of original letters, from which I think much amusement will be derived. I know no man so deep in old genealogy and antiquated scandal; I fear he will destroy the honour of God knows how many of the great-grandmothers of our present noblesse."

His annotations to songs and memoirs would have been delightful had he known what to miss out. It is pleasant to learn that "Grace Macfarlane"—the "wandering darling" of the song—was an Edinburgh toast of ninety years earlier: but he must needs spoil the story by adding a clumsy misadventure of the lady.

The interchange of books, duplicates of rare pamphlets, and curios was constant and friendly between Scott and Sharpe. Sharpe had it, moreover, always in his power to gratify Scott and other friends by gifts of his graceful humorous etchings. In the most famous of these—Queen Elizabeth "dancing high and disposedly"—the merriment culminates in the charming boy-musician who, on his knees, fiddles an accompaniment, a very Puck of intelligent mischief.

Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe was too much "the gentleman born, like Crispinus," to turn his talents to account as he might have done. It is amusing to see how Scott—who in his own case maintained the "right of the bear to lick his own paws"—humoured this prejudice in his friend. When in 1808 he invited him to contribute to the *Quarterly*, the question of paying is airily referred to. "I retain so much the old habit of a barrister, that I cannot help adding that the fee is ten guineas

a sheet, which may serve to buy an odd book now and then." It was characteristic of Sharpe's fine-gentleman way of doing business that when he condescended to traffic with Constable concerning the editing of an interesting but unsaleable reprint, he demanded an unreasonable sum. As a rule he preferred losing money on small editions of curious books, privately printed, which he presented to his friends.

In two important publications Sir Walter was almost a collaborator, so keen and personal was the interest he took in them.

In 1816 Scott published 'Old Mortality.' It is astonishing to read that this noble romance and singularly fair historic narrative raised a storm of indignation in Scott's own country. The religious world was outraged, and in 'The Edinburgh Christian Instructor' the learned Dr M'Crie made vehement attacks on Scott's historical accuracy. Dr M'Crie belonged to a school, common to all Churches, who write history for edification. He starts with the position that one party—Reformers, and later, Covenanters—were *in the right*, and facts are emphasised or apologised for as they make for this position. In his account the Covenanters are patient, enlightened, evangelical saints. He knows nothing of that medium, dense with superstition, credulity, vengeful passions, quarrels, and suspicions, through which the authentic light of heaven did indeed reach the earnest, impetuous souls of Covenanting men and women. With a contrary but corresponding prejudice Sharpe saw in that light from heaven merely the medium in which motes and dust and earthly damps were floating. At an earlier date Joseph Ritson, in discussing Scottish historians, had said, with his usual curious insight, "I always prefer Jacobite or Tory writers. . . . You consult history for facts, not principles. The Whigs have the advantage in the latter, and this they labour to support by a misrepresentation of the former."



Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, a Tory and Jacobite writer, might be fundamentally wrong in his historic prejudices—one cannot call them “principles,” so entirely were they the result of taste, not of thought,—but he had a way of getting hold of inconvenient facts. In 1807 he had received from Surtees an MS. ‘History of the Church of Scotland’ by one James Kirkton, an outed minister in the reign of Charles II. Wodrow had used the MS., but with omissions. There was another MS. of Kirkton in the Advocates’ Library, but when Scott hunted it up he found that Dr M’Crie had removed it with another MS.—the narrative of one of Bishop Sharpe’s murderers—“from their place in the Library, and deposited them in a snug and secret corner.” Whether Scott meant to suggest that this was a *ruse de guerre* on the part of his reverend opponent or not, there is no doubt that the two parties were drawn up watching each other’s movements, and Sharpe was Scott’s sworn ally. In the course of the next year (1817) he published his edition of Kirkton. The text of this honest and readable Covenanter in its unconscious admission justifies the author of ‘Old Mortality’ rather than his critic in ‘The Edinburgh Christian Instructor.’ In a series of entertaining footnotes, drawn from Presbyterian pamphlets and sermons, Sharpe adds touches as grotesque as those which in the novel had given offence to Dr M’Crie and his following. Sir Walter really was as far removed from Sharpe’s blind and irritable impatience of the “puddle of Presbyterianism” as from M’Crie’s obstinate prejudice, but the timely publication had given him sword and buckler in his controversy, and nothing draws men into more cordial intimacy than fighting on the same side.

Sharpe’s other important publication—‘Law’s Memorials’—dealt with witchcraft and ghostly apparitions, subjects that at all times powerfully attracted Scott, and were even more akin to Sharpe’s grotesque imagination.

When, in 1823, Sir Henry Raeburn died—with a portrait of Scott still wet on the easel,—Scott at once set all his friends in motion to secure the post of King's Limner for Scotland for Sharpe. In all questions of posts and patronage Scott's ideas were entirely eighteenth century, but the days of nepotism and sinecures were passing, and Lord Melville wrote good-humouredly but firmly: "I really think Wilkie ought to be the man."

As long as Scott was alive, eager to serve him, interested in all his undertakings, lending and borrowing rare publications, consulting Sharpe on questions of genealogies and antiquarianisms, his genial presence expelled the evil spirit of grudging and detraction—the instinct to "take down" another man which was the bane of Sharpe's character as it has been of other Scotsmen both distinguished and obscure. When Scott was gone and a younger generation turned eagerly to his surviving contemporary for an authentic report of the greatest of Scotsmen, his irritable criticism suggested—at least to Daniel Wilson—"at times a momentary jealousy, as of one who had once contemplated the possibility of competing with him in the race for fame." There was more spleen than deliberate judgment when he said of a new writer, Charles Dickens: "He is worth a hundred Sir W. Scotts, because he paints extravagantly real manners; Sir Walter what never was—is—or will be."

It is pleasanter to take leave of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe on a kindlier note. He had a jealous love for the beauty and antiquity of Edinburgh. His exertions saved Holyrood from disfiguring reconstructions, and, had he had his will, no dull amorphous Mound, but an airy span of arches, would have bridged the valley between the Old Town and the New.



## JAMES HOGG.

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IN all languages and in many country districts the story is current of the beneficent Brownie who in the night-time haunts farm-kitchens, doing the work of the slumbering inmates on the sole condition that he may come and go unnoticed and receive neither reward nor hire beyond "his cream-bowl duly set." Human gratitude or curiosity breaks the compact, and the garments officiously bestowed drive the proud, kindly visitant from the hearth of his blundering hosts.

Let this tale stand as a parable for the folk-lore—*märchen*, ballads, legends—which for centuries dwelt familiarly by poor men's hearths, but vanished for ever as soon as editors and critics caught the shy, beautiful creature and bound it in a book.

One old woman, even in the moment when Walter Scott was taking down a ballad from her lips, had prescience to see what this would lead to, and courage to declare it roundly, emphasising her words by striking the Shirra's knee with her hard, brown hand: "There was never ane o' my sangs prentit till ye prentit them yersel', and ye hae spoilt them a'thegither. They were made for singing and no' for reading, but ye hae broken the charm, and they'll never be sung mair."

Margaret Hogg (or Laidlaw, for in Scotland the maiden name clings to married women of marked

character), in her "but and ben" of Ettrickshall, was but too true a prophet; but the three to whom she spoke had no ears for her foreboding. Willie Laidlaw, son of the farmer of Blackhouse, in a tremor of enthusiasm had brought his new friend, the "Shirra," over into Ettrick to hear Margaret Laidlaw, the best memory in the parish for ballads, sing the one authentic version of "Auld Maitlan"; he had sent an old man to bring in from the hill Margaret Hogg's son, the gay bright-eyed young shepherd, "Jamie the poeter," whose songs and ballads were already sung in many a farm-steading along the waterside. Hogg has described the scene, and for once his verse is as direct as his conversation:—

“When Maitland’s song first met thine ear,  
How the furled visage up did clear,  
Beaming delight—though now a shade  
Of doubt would darken into dread.  
Till she, the ancient Minstreless,  
With fervid voice and kindling eye ;  
Sung forth these words in eldritch shriek,  
While tears stood on thy nut-brown cheek :  
‘O, we are nane o’ the lads o’ France,  
Nor ever pretend to be ;  
We be three lads o’ fair Scotland,  
Auld Maitland’s sons, a’ three.’  
Thy fist made all the table ring—  
‘By God, sir ! but that is the thing !’

Margaret Hogg was equally prepared to give the history of the original authority for the ballad, "Auld Babby Maitland, who was housekeeper to the first Laird o' Tushielaw. She was said to have been ither than a gude ane, and there are mony queer stories about hersel'."

On this occasion the "queer stories" were not forthcoming, but probably there was no scandal, no deed of darkness, no merry jest, no tale of witchery, no ghostly experience of the past hundred years, that was not told in the firelight by Margaret Hogg to her children.

There had been trouble enough in the little household, hard work always, and, when a small farm had been tried, bad seasons, anxiety, bankruptcy, and the return of the father to his old trade of herding other men's flocks. But at the worst of times Margaret Hogg and her youngest son had told tales and sung songs, and, like Peer Gynt and his mother, had escaped from the sorry facts of life—the black damp walls, the empty meal-chest—into a land of fairy wonders and ghostly horrors.

“Do you mind how you sat beside me  
So often at evening time,  
Spread the sheepskin and lullabied me  
With many a charm and rhyme?”

There were stories in plenty on both sides of the house. Margaret's father, William Laidlaw, had been shepherd in Phaup on the upper Ettrick; her childhood had been passed in the very quick of the stillest, greenest, most magical of Border valleys. Even now at midsummer, when the smooth mounds are golden in the late evening sunshine, and the light is a clear green in the northern sky, and only the singing of the burn breaks the silence, one might indulge a pleasant half-belief in supernatural presences mischievously hiding, independent of human beings and not wholly friendly: to Margaret Laidlaw the “Guid Folk” were a fact as substantial as kirk and market, and more familiar. Her own father, Will o' Phaup, was the last man in the district who had authentically seen and spoken to the fairies.

He was sitting one evening at the gable-end of his cottage when, just as in the ballad of Lady Anne—

“Out of the wood cam' three bonnie boys,  
As naked as they were born.”

“‘Gude day to you, Willie Laidlaw.’

“‘Gude day to you, creatures.’

“‘Can ye gie us up-putting for the nicht?’

“‘I think three siccan bits o' shreds o' hurchins winna be ill to put up. Where cam' ye frae?’”

But when the boys declare their commission to ask for a silver key, some old stirrings of conscience brought Willie to a stand.

“‘A silver key? In God’s name where cam’ ye frae?’”

But at the sound of the holy name the creatures vanished, and what the mystery of the silver key might be Margaret Laidlaw could never tell her son.

But she had tales of other visitors to the cottage of Phaup,—of men arriving in the dead of night, awakening the household with the stamping of pack-horses, the rattling of chains, the unpacking of brandy casks; for Will of Phaup—a wild rattling fellow, who could jump farther and run faster than any other man in the district—was hand-in-glove with the smugglers from the distant coast. The cot in the hollow of the hills had become an irregular change-house, where gentlemen might drink French brandy at a shilling the bottle, and perhaps come to blows “before they paid the lawing.”

The stories on the other side of the house are of a darker caste. The Hoggs had for generations farmed Fauldshope under the Scotts of Harden. More than one Lucky Hogg had been a notable witch; the most famous had turned Maister Michael Scott into a hare with his own wand, but, herself falling under a spell, had danced to death chanting—

“Maister Michael Scott’s man  
Cam’ for bread and gat nane.”

The Scottish peasant might fare coarsely and sparsely, cold and damp and toil might be his lot, his home might be remote and solitary, but there was no vacuity in his life. It was bounded by mystery, adventure, terror. A man rising at dawn to go to work might see fairies vanishing from the green, a man stumbling home in the dark might hear threatening voices or see unchancy sights.

This background of superstition added a touch of

awe to the tales told on winter nights,—tales already sufficiently full of colour, for Hogg tells us that “the poor illiterate people in these glens knew no other entertainment than in repeating and listening to the feats of their ancestors”—ancestors who had ridden after Jamie Telfer’s kye and broken Kinmont Willie’s prison at Carlisle.

Other elements gave point and pith to conversation in the shepherd’s cot. If his religion shaped the life of the Scottish peasant, his manner of life coloured his religion. The shepherd prayed for the things he really valued, “the lang stride, the clear eye.” In times of trouble he reasoned as fearlessly as Job with the Almighty: “The flocks on a thousand hills are Thine, and their lives and death wad be naething to Thee, Thou wadst neither be the richer nor poorer, but it’s a great matter to us.” Family prayers afforded the head of the house opportunities, in the form of petitions, of expressing his opinions freely on the characters of his family; he might even pray for resignation on the advent of an unwelcome daughter-in-law. The interest of the Old Testament was inexhaustible to readers who weighed the moral characters of “Sandy Ballat” and “Golly of Gath.” Belief in plenary inspiration could not suppress the critical spirit. “If it hadna’ been the Lord’s will, that verse had been better left out.”

Such was the converse round the shepherd’s hearth; outside there was the unchanging life of field and fold, the lambing-time when men rise before dawn to go their rounds, the winter storms when flocks are driven with their faces to the wind, the silent despair of rainy seasons when sheep rot on the hills. Scott in the fourth introductory epistle in ‘Marmion’ has described the heroic side of the shepherd’s life; Hogg deals chiefly with the lighter side,—the merry-makings at shearings and ewe-milking, the “daffing,” the singing, the stolen courtship in the long midsummer twilights.



Such were the elements that were doing their best to shape James Hogg into a poet. Other schooling he had very little. Poverty set him to earn his own keep when he was only eight years old, herding cows on the unenclosed hillside. At that time a girl slightly older than himself herded her lambs on the same spot, the two shared their "piece," and the motherly elder child made the boy rest with his head on her knee. "One day I heard her say to herself, 'Poor little laddie, he's just tired to death.' And then I wept till I was afraid she would feel the hot tears on her knee." This quick sensibility was to accompany Hogg all his days,—it was the main element in his light-hearted enjoyment of life.

Much has been made, both in glorification of what Hogg achieved and in excuse for what he failed to achieve, of his total lack of education. But if the instinctive love of knowledge had been there, he must have fought his way to it as Leyden did, as Alexander Murray (the Orientalist) did. One wonders if Hogg could have assimilated much education, or would have gained much if he had. Things made a lively impression on him and passed instantly into fluent numbers. Self-criticism was impossible to a man frankly carried away with delight and wonder at his own works. "Aiblins ye mind yon fragment upon the sclate which ye despised t'other morning?" he said once to R. P. Gillies, who had suggested a gentle criticism. "Eh, man, sin syne it's ettlin' to turn out the vera best thing I ever composed, and that's no' saying little, ye ken." Other men's criticism he held in scorn. "Eh, man, neither Willie Erskine nor ony critic beneath the sun shall lead me. If I ha'ena sense eneuch to make and mend my ain wark, no ither hands or heads shall meddle wi' it. I want nae help, thank God, neither from books nor man."

If Hogg could really have put into his poetry all the

influences that had surrounded his youth, he might indeed have afforded to dispense with learning. He once characteristically boasted to Scott, "Dear Sir Walter, ye can never suppose that I belong to your school o' chivalry. Ye are King o' that School, but I'm the King o' the Mountain and Fairy School, which is a far higher ane than yours." Had Hogg told the secret of the mountains or caught the full light of fairyland upon his pages, his claim had been allowed. But it is at rarest intervals through his voluminous work that we feel the touch of genius. Once indeed, like his grandfather, he looked into fairyland; the glamour from another country lies on "Kilmeny." We pass from a world aglow with autumn woods under a smouldering sunset, a world warm with the smoke of human hearths, into an unearthly twilight luminous and pure as a moon rainbow. And the spell of that strange country has fallen on Kilmeny,—

"As still was her look and as still was her e'e  
As the stillness that lies on the emerant lee,  
Or the mist that sleeps on the waveless sea."

To see that vision even once, was genius.

But Fairyland did not open its gates a second time to James Hogg.

There is real diablerie, a touch that makes the hair rise, in the stable scene in "The Confessions of a Justified Sinner," when, in the darkness, the horses become frantic at the invisible approach of the Evil one. But in most of Hogg's tales the horrors march in battalions, each nullifying the effect of the other. Hogg is perhaps most successful in the mingled humour and horror of tales of witchcraft. He himself considered the "Witch of Fife" "the most happy and splendid piece of humorous poetry that I ever wrote." Sir Walter was so generous about other men's work that he may quite well have assured Hogg that "there never was such a

thing written for genuine and ludicrous humour." One of Sir Walter's favourite entertainments was to repeat other men's poems without missing a word. It was only on leisurely occasions—a boating party down the Firth of Forth, a dark hour on Tweedside when the salmon-leistering party waited for a new peat—that he could overtake the endless procession of verses in Hogg's "Witch of Fife" and "Gudeman of Gilmanscleugh."

Burns had made the path to recognition smooth—too smooth—for Hogg. The educated world had been surprised into seeing life through the eyes of a ploughman; his pity, his satiric indignation, had knocked at its heart, the music of his songs still rang in its ears, the clouded ending of his brief day haunted its conscience with a vague sense of guilt,—it was in only too great a hurry to recognise a genius from the sheepfolds. The men of Hogg's own class, the shepherds and farmers, exulted in the belief that they had among them another Burns. It is precisely this comparison that is fatal to Hogg. He never looked at the world within as Burns did, and so he saw the world without quite superficially. Love-making, as he understood it, was a secret to be shared with "all the jolly shepherds that whistle through the glen," not the passion that seeks expression in a hundred delicate or exultant forms.

Let us be thankful for what we have received. If Hogg had not, like Burns, learned for whole days

". . . to wander  
Adown some trotting burn's meander,  
An' no' think lang,"

he had a schoolboy's happy memory of the burn,

"Where the pools are bright and deep,  
Where the grey trout lie asleep."

If he had not Burns' heart for dogs and ewes, and even

mice, at least he carried in his heart the song heard on the uplands of the

"Bird of the wilderness  
Blithesome and cumberless."

If only the skylark note were heard more frequently in his songs!

There must have been in Hogg's talk all the contact with life, the emotion and the wit, which are far to seek in his poetry. Into his oddly assorted equipment for life Nature threw in, as a make-weight, the gift of joyousness, a reckless extravagant joyousness that broke out in all societies, that survived the wreck of all his business undertakings, that neither flattery and success nor failure and mortification could subdue. We have an attractive picture of Hogg in the first flush of success in the recollections of Allan Cunningham. The Shepherd was herding on Queensberry Hill in the summer of 1806, and the young mason, in a white heat of enthusiasm, had walked up from Dumfries on the chance of only seeing the poet. Twenty years later he wrote to Hogg: "Often do I tread back to the foot of old Queensberry and meet you coming down amid the sunny rain. . . . The little sodded sheiling where we took shelter rises on my sight, your two dogs are at my feet, the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' [Hogg's presentation copy] is in my hand. . . . Poetry, nothing but Poetry, is our talk, and we are supremely happy." Allan's recollections are always clear cut, as if done with the strokes of his chisel.

All Hogg's admirers were not clean-handed young masons from Annandale: the Crown Tavern in the Grassmarket and the meetings of the Forum Debating Club were not so good for Poetry as the "sodded sheiling" in the "sunny rain"; not "Poetry, nothing but Poetry," but flattery and conviviality, were the offerings many of his admirers brought to his shrine. In society



he took his place easily enough, his exuberant joyousness forbade self-consciousness, and the Edinburgh world was genially tolerant of eccentricity. R. P. Gillies, an observant looker-on at life (but not particularly shrewd), declares that "the appearance of the good, honest Shepherd in our Edinburgh society had a marked influence on the tone of it." He implies that Hogg brought more animal life, more songs and laughter, into supper-parties. On one occasion he found the Shepherd's toddy-brewing a genial solvent when the visitors, Mrs Grant of Laggan and the contentious Pinkerton, were quarrelling about religion at his table. Sometimes Hogg's animal spirits astonished visitors from the South, as in 1822, when Thomas Moore described the Shepherd at a party "howling out a song," and beating time with a fist on the shoulder of a lady sitting in front of him.

The charm of unself-conscious zest in life, zest in his own powers and in the friendliness of his fellow-men, remained with Hogg through all his days. Even when Carlyle saw him in 1834 in London society, "in the mingled character of zany and raree-show," it was this absence of self-consciousness that made Carlyle, himself fresh from the serious, genuine life of Annandale, recognise "that the charm of this poor man was to be found herein that he *is* a real product of Nature and able to speak naturally, which not one in a thousand is." "I felt interest," he adds, "for the poor herd body; wondered to see him blown hither from his sheep-folds, and how, quite friendless as he was, he went along cheerful, mirthful, and musical. . . . Once or twice in singing (for he sang of his own) there was an emphasis in poor Hogg's look,—expressive of feeling—almost of enthusiasm."

The influence of that "vile sixpenny planet" which Scott says somewhere "shone in at the cottage window" when Hogg was born, prevented even the "Queen's



Wake" from being a pecuniary success; farming adventures failed, and publishers looked askance at the lengthy poems that poured from Hogg's pen. Nothing crushed his buoyancy. If all the world were not applauding, he consoled himself with the belief that the whole aristocracy and men of letters "were set against me and determined to keep me down, nay, to crush me to a nonentity!"

Endless and ingenious were his literary enterprises and of incredible audacity. Totally ignorant as he confessed himself to be of real life, he started a little paper called 'The Spy,' after the fashion of the 'Spectator' or 'Rambler,' with an added spice of personality. When Scott pointed out the danger of courting comparison with Addison and Johnson, the Shepherd replied cheerfully: "I'm no' the least feared for that. My papers may not be sae yelegant as theirs, but I expect to make them mair original." When Scott refused to father one of the Shepherd's many autobiographical prefaces (which Hogg himself was to write and Scott to sign substituting "he" for "I"), the refusal rankled and made him naïvely complain, "I never knew any gentleman so shy and chary of his name and interest as Sir Walter." It is only fair to say that, as far as posterity may judge, Hogg's methods of doing business at St Boswells Fair were less "original" than his notions of literary honesty.

Through all the ups and downs of fortune, through all his follies, presumptions, mortifications, and triumphs, the centre of gravity in Hogg's life was his relation to Walter Scott. Not indeed Hogg's wayward affection for Scott, which was subject to caprice, resentment, jealousy, and once at least suffered total eclipse, but Scott's steady, responsible, patient kindness for Hogg. Hogg and Hogg's difficulties appealed to every instinct in Scott,—to his constant desire to help less fortunate men of letters, to the local feeling which allowed the claim of every dweller on Ettrick or Yarrow on the

Shirra's kindness, to his taste for all conversation which dealt with the traditional and supernatural, and finally to his immense, wholesome sense of humour. He used to say that the Shepherd afforded him more diversion than any play that he ever saw acted. The first letter he received from Hogg was an earnest of a rich and original mine of amusement. When they parted after that first interview at Ettrickshall in 1802, Hogg had undertaken to collect ballads and tunes from his uncle, reputed the best singer in the country. Now the folk in Ettrick divided into those who, like Will o' Phaup, followed the instincts of the old Adam, "shouted on the law, and routed in the ha'," and sang and drank and laughed, and into those who held by the spiritual rule of life taught through his thirty years of ministry by Thomas Boston, who in Ettrick Manse had pondered on the Fourfold State of the Christian soul. Sometimes one of the reckless joyous livers passed into the austerer fold, and among these was Hogg's uncle—not without considerable chagrin to his nephew.

"My uncle hath never had any tune save that which he saith his prayer to, and my mother's is quite gone by reason of age and frailty. . . . My uncle, said I? He is, Mr Scott, the most incorrigible man alive. . . . He came one night professedly to see me and crack with me, as he said. Thinking this a good opportunity, I treated him with the best the house could afford, and gave him a hearty glass and, to humour him, talked a little of religion. Then I set him on, but, good Lord! had you heard him, it was impossible to get him off again. . . . What a deluge was poured upon me of errors, sins, lusts, covenants broken, burned, and buried, legal teachers, patronage, and what not. In short, my dram was lost to my purpose. The mentioning a song put him into a passion."

Lockhart's account of Hogg's behaviour to Scott is painful reading. One reads it thinking how Scott would have told the same trifling, preposterous, even graceless incidents, with what humorous twinkling under the

shaggy brows, what kind, sly smiles lurking round the mouth. Once when Hogg, left to himself, had flung away from Scott (discovering a real originality of insult in the famous letter beginning "Damned Sir"), Scott patiently waited till Hogg was brought low by illness, and then only bestowed help through Mr Grieve, the hatter, the best of Hogg's intimates. The Shepherd's letter, written when he was broken with sickness and remorse, reads like the writing of an awkward, affectionate, penitent schoolboy. Scott's reply was an invitation to breakfast next day.

One need not go to Lockhart to be convinced of the headlong unwisdom of the one poet and the benevolent good sense of the other. Hogg's own little book about his friend, with all its tactlessness and crudity, gives a lovable portrait of Scott as well as an incomparable one of the Ettrick Shepherd. Hogg was too shrewd and humorous to be altogether the dupe of his own egotism; he knew the value of Sir Walter's advice, though he rarely took it. He was aware of the eye watching over his adventures in society. At a great gathering of the Clans at Bowhill, Hogg relates that at one of the tables where the ladies sat all the company was noble. "But I, having had some chat with the ladies before dinner, and always rather a favoured pet with them, imagined that they could not possibly live without me, and placed myself among them. But I had a friend at the cross table at the head of the room who saw better. Sir Walter arose and requested the Duke as a particular favour and obligation that he would allow Mr Hogg to come to his table, for, in fact, he could not do without him."

Oftener the Shepherd chafed under the restraining hand. "I must confess that before people of high station he did not much encourage my speeches and stories. He raised his eyebrows up and glowered, and put his upper lip far over the under one, seeming to be

always terrified of what was to be coming next, and then he generally cut me short by some droll anecdote to the same purport of what I was saying. In this he did not give me fair play, for in my own broad homely way I am a very good speaker and teller of a story too."

Yet this was the companion Scott desired to take with him to the Coronation of George IV., requesting Lord Sidmouth to secure seats for both poets in Westminster Abbey and at the subsequent banquet. Hogg was in low water at the time, and Scott, who had always an eye to the advantageous for his friends, hoped that Hogg might either secure some patronage by a poetical tribute of loyalty or write a popular (and lucrative) description of the ceremony. Hogg's instinct was in this instance wiser than Scott's,—he made St Boswells Fair an excuse for staying at home. There was room in Hogg's nature for gratitude, when egotism gave it a chance, though it was not of the essence of his nature as it was of Leyden's; but he was not bred so dull as to fail to recognise the unvarying goodness of Scott. "He was the only one I ever knew whom no man either poor or rich held at ill-will. I was the only exception myself that ever came to my knowledge, and that was only for a short season, and all the while it never lessened his interest in my welfare."

There was another member of Hogg's household whose simple shrewdness and warmth of heart apprehended Scott's character with greater quickness and delicacy. In no type of character has Scott been happier than in the delineation of the Scottish countrywoman. Leaving Jeanie Deans on one side, there is Bessie Maclure, the daughter of the Covenant and the only saint Scott ever cared to paint; Jenny Dennison in her matronly days guiding her Cuddie with a firm hand; Ailie Dinmont—that "delicious portrait" that Lockhart thought was drawn from Willie Laidlaw's mother. Almost



every Scottish Waverley novel has one or more of these good-hearted matrons. What Scott liked in a woman, gentle or simple, was nature, sense, kindness, and as much wit as God wills. All these he found in the "wiselike" handsome woman whom Hogg, at the age of fifty, persuaded to marry him. Scott had evidently been doubtful as to the choice the Shepherd might make, though it was probably gratuitous to give him this advice: "If ever you choose a wife, Hogg, for goodness' sake, as you value your own happiness, don't choose a very religious one. . . . There is nothing I dread so much as a very religious woman. She is not only a dangerous person but a perfect shower-bath on all social conviviality."

He had evidently come across some less sensible enthusiasts strongly influenced by that wave of Evangelicalism which, spreading from England, was reviving in a weaker but no less narrow form the strictness of Scottish Presbyterianism; yet it is with no unsympathetic hand that he has drawn, in Katherine Glover, the Fair Maid of Perth, just such a type of feminine piety, gentle but vigorously intolerant of masculine "cakes and ale."

Mrs Hogg was too wise to attempt being a "shower-bath on conviviality" at Altrive: the dignified worth of her character and the affection he had for his children were a more effectual restraint on the social instincts of the Shepherd.

Hogg tells two anecdotes of Mrs Hogg's affection for Sir Walter, pleasant to repeat; and though, *more suo*, he forces himself to the front in one of them, we can, like Sir Walter, ignore his claim and give our attention to the sincere and simple woman at his side.

"The last time Margaret saw him was at his own house in Maitland Street. . . . We were passing Charlotte Square when I said, 'See, yon is Sir Walter's house at yon red lamp.' 'Oh, let me go in and see him once more.' 'No, no, Margaret,' said



I, 'you know how little time we have, and it would be too bad to intrude on his hours of quiet and study at this time of day.' 'Oh, but I must go in,' said she, 'and get a shake of his kind honest hand once more.' So I was . . . obliged to comply. In we went, and were received with all the affection of old friends, but his whole discourse was addressed to my wife, while I was left to shift for myself among books and newspapers. He talked to her of our family and of our prospects of being able to give them a good education, which he recommended at every risk and at every sacrifice."

Scott was in the very thickest of his fight with time and circumstance when he laid his work aside for half an hour to speak to this simple-minded woman about her children, and to tell her his fears for his own little grandchild.

The other story goes back to the earlier happier days when, as the Shepherd tells us, Scott "found no breakfast so good as the homely meal at Mount Benger."

"As he was going away he snatched up my little daughter Margaret Laidlaw and kissed her, and then laying his hand on her head said: 'God forever bless you, my dear child,' on which my wife burst into tears. On my coming back from seeing him into the carriage . . . I said: 'What ailed you, Margaret?'

"'Oh,' said she, 'I thought if he had but just done the same to them all, I do not know what in the world I would not have given.'"

Many mothers, gentle and simple, would agree with Margaret Hogg.



V.

BUCCLEUCH GROUP

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THE HOUSE OF BUCCLEUCH  
FRANCES, LADY DOUGLAS  
LADY LOUISA STUART



## THE HOUSE OF BUCCLEUCH.

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“THE only foible I could ever discover in Sir Walter was a too strong leaning to the old aristocracy of the country,” wrote the Ettrick Shepherd. What Hogg raps out in his crude, rash way has been insinuated or gravely reprehended by others, both contemporaries and biographers,—Lord Ward and Dudley with his cheap acid sneers at Scott’s “love of lords and ladies,” and Mr Hutton in his ‘Life of Scott,’ with prosaic pointing of the moral.

Scott *did* like lords and ladies; he also liked Gothic architecture and armorial bearings and the pomp and pageantry of war and mediæval romances, and all for the same reason, that they stood for that feudal and romantic past which haunted him like a passion. To understand the soul of feudalism, the responsibility on the one part and the loyalty on the other, he had only to look into his own heart. To prove how binding feudal ties might be even in these latter days, he had only to think of Tom Purdie on the one hand, the Duke of Buccleuch on the other, and of himself between them, equally, in their due degree, the friend of both. His scheme of society—in defiance of the industrial and commercial developments which he vainly tried to ignore or oppose—was feudal in its simplicity and blindness and nobleness. In the hard times of the year 1817 he provided work for thirty additional labourers on the Abbotsford estate, “incurring the expense of several years at once to serve mine honest neighbours who were likely to want work but for such exertion.” In the moment



when he received the news of his financial disaster his first thought was for the poor people dependent on him. "This news will make sad hearts at Darnick and in the cottages of Abbotsford." Miss Edgeworth was no less discerning than epigrammatic when she said, "Dean Swift said that he had written his books that people might treat him like a great lord: Sir Walter writes his in order that he may be able to treat his people as a great lord ought to do."

No one has ever pretended that Scott's avowedly aristocratic sympathies influenced for a moment his choice of friends: the bulk of these were his natural associates, men who counted kin with him on the Border side, or had fought with him in the High School Yards, or swept the Parliament House Lobby with their gowns, or ridden at his side in the Edinburgh Light Horse.

But if Scott, like most men, had confined his intimate affections to his social equals, his life would have lost much of its human sweetness and half of its fun. The novels would have lacked their convincing intimacy with Scottish life of every grade if Scott had not counted Leyden and Laidlaw and Joseph Train among his intimates, if Hogg and Morrison the engineer and Alan Cunningham, and all the queer or homespun figures (whose class Lockhart indicates by the word "worthy"), had not come and gone freely in his house. The first invitation Scott accepted after the Holyrood Pageant was to the Annual Dinner of the Weavers' Guild at Galashiels: Royalty could not have bidden its guests more gracefully.

"Last year your presence made us canty,  
For which we ha'e ye yet to thank.  
This year, in faith, we canna want ye,  
Your absence wad mak sic a blank.  
As a' our neibours are our freends,  
The company is *not* selected,  
But for to mak ye some amends,  
There's not a social soul neglected."



LORD DALKEITH, MR CAMPBELL SCOTT, LADY FRANCES SCOTT.

*From a Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, at The Hirsch.*



If we, seeing through Scott's eyes, can think kindly and sympathetically of "Deacon Wood and Deacon Walker," Scott's hosts at Galashiels, we must in fairness see the stout and kilted guest at Holyrood through the same romantic medium; we must see behind that rather absurd figure a train of kings, august and shadowy, claiming our allegiance. As for Scott's personal regard for George IV., instead of thinking more meanly of Scott for indulging this sentiment it might be reasonable to think more nobly of the Prince for having evoked it.

But there was in Scott's heart a dearer and more intimate loyalty that had no need of idealising imagination. "Next and almost equal to the throne," writes Lockhart, "was Buccleuch."

The representatives of this great historic house in Scott's day had not, like the Mintos, the tradition of active statesmanship; they made no claim to the grace and genius of the Lindsays, but they had the qualities Scott reckoned essential in a great chief,—public duty, private kindness, devotion to the State, love of the land, benevolence to the people committed to their charge. The Buccleuchs needed no one to quicken their sense of the obligations of their position, but they probably learned from Scott the romance that attaches to their name and lineage more than to any other territorial house in Scotland. While stories

"Of good Earl Francis dead and gone,  
And of Earl Walter, rest him God,  
A braver ne'er to battle rode,"

lingered in hall and cot on Tweedside, there was no one to sound them in the ears of the lineal descendants of the "Lairds of Branksome." After the death of Anne, Duchess of Monmouth, the family continued to live obscurely and lethargically in England, the Monmouth rebellion still disqualifying them for politics, and

the Darien scheme having impaired their fortunes. With Duke Henry, the fourth in descent from the Duchess, the family returned to Scotland and their rightful place in the life of the country in the year 1769.

During the duke's long minority his stepfather, the brilliant mercurial Charles Townshend,<sup>1</sup> directed his education. Their relations were not particularly happy. The young duke was shy, and, like other Scottish youths, slow of development; but if he suffered under his quick-witted stepfather's raillery, he took his measure with a boy's silent shrewdness, and tacitly but firmly resisted his influence. Under his awkward passivity, the boy was early aware that he had a position independent of his stepfather. That his imagination turned even in boyhood towards his own country is shown by an incident related by Dr Carlyle of Inveresk. On a visit to London, that courtly minister waited on Lady Dalkeith and Mr Townshend, the patrons of his parish. The young duke, then about twelve years old, hung about the table, turning over a certain book till his stepfather called out impatiently—"Well then, come and show Dr Carlyle that book that you are always so fond of looking at." Hotly blushing, the boy brought a Latin grammar edited by the schoolmaster of Dalkeith with the usual laudatory dedication to his Grace.

When in 1767 his stepson came of age, Townshend, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, would have launched him on a political career, but the duke had the wise man's gift of knowing his own limitations, and quietly set about shaping his life after his own plan. One morning in that winter little Lady Frances Scott, already mature and womanly though only sixteen, arrived at her Aunt

<sup>1</sup> The duke's mother was Lady Caroline Campbell, eldest daughter of John, Duke of Argyll. Her changes of title are confusing. She married first Lord Dalkeith, who died before succeeding to the Dukedom of Buccleuch, and secondly Charles Townshend. In 1769 a peerage in her own right was granted to her with one of her father's titles, and from thenceforth she is known as Lady Greenwich.



Lady Mary Coke's, brimful of happiness and mystery; her brother had confided his hopes of winning Lady Betty, the only daughter and, as it turned out, the heiress of the wealthy house of Montagu.

The story of the duke's wedding as told by Lady Mary Coke is amusingly like a fairy-tale told by the godmother who was not bidden to the christening. From an ingrained dislike to fuss and finery, the duke determined to invite no one to the wedding save the parents and brothers and sisters of bride and bridegroom. Lady Mary's "sensible mortification," stifled in the presence of her sister Lady Greenwich, broke out in indignant complaint to the one quite safe and sympathetic member of the family. "Lady Frances," she writes in her Journal, "always discreet and sensible, to her I opened my heart and told her how much her brother's unkindness had shocked me. . . . She knew how much I had loved him, but that I believed one was always to be disappointed of one's wishes. . . . All this was only for herself, that in general I never talked of what vexed me." To make her indignation felt, Lady Mary had intended to refuse pointedly to accompany the young duchess to court, but a new gown—which had cost sixty pounds—was a sensible inducement to Christian forgiveness. Besides, what middle-aged woman, whether aunt or fairy-godmother, is proof against a happy young bride? "Called on new Duchess of Buccleuch. We found her dressing her head and looking like a little angel, her behaviour the prettiest in the world. . . . I believe her as sensible as she is handsome."

Lady Frances accompanied the couple down to Dalkeith. The very young trio returned to the home of their race with every determination of doing their duty, but at first it must have been bewildering enough. Their country neighbours were Scottish in speech and prejudices, homely in their manners, and, to Southern eyes, slatternly and unpolished in their houses and household

ways. Certain feudal customs were still expected from the ducal party. On two days of the week they received to dinner all who chose to present themselves. To a young Englishwoman these dinners must have been a severe ordeal. Elizabeth, Duchess of Buccleuch, was perhaps one of the people who safeguard shyness behind a dignified formality. When Louis XVIII. was in Scotland he visited at Dalkeith, and so completely had his hostess calculated every detail of ceremonial that the prince felt as confused as a novice. No crowned head he had known compared with the duchess in stateliness. In her youth this stateliness was only increased by shyness; moreover, in the early days at Dalkeith the Scottish speech and manners of her guests must have been as perplexing to her as her English retirement to them. The duke's benevolence and public spirit did not supply him with ready conversation or easy geniality, and the presence of his old tutor, Dr Adam Smith, did not enliven the party, at least if we are to believe Dr Carlyle, who takes credit to himself for having introduced toasts and songs into these dreadful entertainments.

The eager curiosity of Edinburgh society with regard to the young couple had probably been damped by the slighting description the sublime Mrs Montague had sent to her obsequious correspondent, Dr Gregory: "Though very good young people, they have no energy of character, and will remain obscure and insignificant." Fortunately, there are other ways of serving society and gaining the goodwill of one's fellows than by holding a blue-stocking salon. Dr Carlyle, at least, early discovered in both duke and duchess the qualities of head and heart that made them later "an honour and a blessing to their country."

Meantime, the third of the trio, little Lady Frances, unhampered by shyness or formality, smiled and jested and enjoyed such popularity among her brother's guests as she herself describes:—

“In my youth I was taught that beauty is naught,  
And wit was at best but a feather ;  
That from both I was free, but might still hope to be  
A good girl, that was better than either.

One says I am witty, another I'm pretty,  
A third talks of virtues most bright ;  
You can't all be blind, and I feel half inclined  
To believe you are all in the right.”

In the years that followed some of the most attractive figures of Scottish society are to be found among the intimates at Dalkeith. Lady Anne Lindsay came with her harpsichord and sang “Auld Robin Gray,” and was of course discovered. The winter she was at Dalkeith some recurring vagary of fashion had made masculine coats and hats the mode for ladies, and she and Lady Frances and some other merry young women formed The Amazon Club, and flouted the men.

Some of the duke's English-bred kinswomen were critical of his Scottish neighbours. Lady Carlow (Lady Louisa Stuart's favourite sister), while admitting the prettiness of the Edinburgh misses, found the beaux so “scrubby” that she feared that her cousins, Baron Mure's daughters, were doomed to be old maids; and Lady Louisa, on a subsequent visit, was struck by the untidiness, and even nastiness, about the doors of Scottish country seats.

Probably the duke was the least critical of the party of such provincial shortcomings. English-bred as he was, it is pleasant to find him warmly appreciative of that quintessence of all that is best in Scottish character, Mrs Cockburn. He was once a visitor to her kinsfolk the Pringles, at their place, The Haining, in Selkirkshire. In those days the house was an old Scottish mansion, whitewashed, high-roofed, with spreading wings and many small-paned windows. The duke, arriving late, happened upon a gay company dancing in one of the long old-

fashioned rooms. He was treated with more cordiality than ceremony, as he himself relates.

"To Haining I came, for dinner too late ;<sup>1</sup>  
 I was forced in a hurry my dinner to *ate*.  
 The mutton was burnt, the soup it was cold,—  
 'Yourself you must blame,' I gently was told.  
 Lord Alemoor was there, and Pringle the tall,  
 With Annie the fair, the queen of the ball.  
 Mark Pringle also, and next in her turn,  
 The joy of my life, the old lady Cockburn."

Among the most charming of the Dalkeith neighbours was old Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield, the beloved uncle of our acquaintance, Mrs Anne Murray Keith. The reproach of untidy policies and slatternly husbandry could not, even by English critics, be levelled against the beautiful seventeenth-century house lying in its meadows below Arthur's Seat, nor against the garden where peaches, and even grapes, ripened against the wall. In his youth Sir Alexander had travelled, had studied medicine, and been a friend of Allan Ramsay. Now in a green old age, surrounded by the young children of his second marriage, he lived on his paternal acres, happily employed out of doors with practical farming, and indoors with composing a "British Georgic,"—"a pleasant diversion in bad or wet weather," the old gentleman says apologetically. The metre being blank verse, the body of the poem was probably less diverting than the author's "little compliment to myself"—

"While I, to agriculture prone,  
 Scarce feel old age at eighty-one."

This charming old gentleman was one winter afternoon in 1783 much gratified by a visit from the father of the young Duchess of Buccleuch, the old Duke of Montagu, then a visitor at Dalkeith. "Most obliging visit from

<sup>1</sup> From the MS. of 'The Dalkeith Book of Poetry.'

the Duke of Montagu, who stayed an hour with me in my library, and was so kind as to inquire how, at my age, past eighty, I contrived to enjoy such good health and spirits. I told him fully, and showed him my amusements and writing (*sic*) a British Georgic on Agriculture, which he desired to peruse, and sent it to him. He is an agreeable gentleman, and told me many curious things about his great grandfather's regimen, who lived to be a hundred. 'A life,' said I, 'beyond my wish a great deal.'"

That the Duke of Buccleuch, like all the best country gentlemen of his time, was "to agriculture prone" is pleasantly apparent in the Dalkeith book of occasional poetry, where his *nom de plume* is Mundungus, and "Bakewell Ewe" furnishes an unexpected rhyme to Buccleuch.

If the landed interest was on its trial during the last decades of the eighteenth century, when Reform was in the air and the new industrialism at the door, in two great movements of the time it took a lead worthy of the best traditions of feudalism, Agricultural Development and National Defence. The work of draining, planting, redeeming waste lands, was going on all over the country, from Norfolk, where Mr Coke was transforming sandy deserts into rich corn-lands, up to Caithness, where Sir John Sinclair turned out with all his tenants and completed a necessary stretch of road in one midsummer day. On his extensive estate the Duke of Buccleuch's plan was simple: "No tenants on the Buccleuch estates who continued worthy of patronage were ever deprived of their farms, and scarce any voluntarily relinquished the possession of them." Contemporary opinion accused Duke Henry of interpreting "worthy of patronage" in a very liberal spirit. In some cases he may have looked more closely on the needs of his poorer tenants than on their deservings. "The rich," says Sir Walter Scott, "never mentioned



him without praise, nor the poor without benedictions." Around this simple-mannered, tender-hearted landlord have grown as many stories as round the popular figures of Haroun Alraschid or our own King James V. Like them, he was credited with going in and out among his people disguised merely in the plainness of his demeanour and simplicity of his manners. A son of one of his smaller tenants in Ettrick—a Border poet—has commemorated in lively verse one such adventure, where the storm-stayed stranger is hospitably received in a ramshackle hovel by a worthy old couple and entertained by the garrulous hostess with this account of his own character:—

"Contented therefore we maun be  
E'en wi' the hut we sit in ;  
They say of landlords east and west  
Our ain Duke Henry is the best  
O' a' the lairds in Britain.

And yet they say he's curious ways,  
And slyly comes amang them  
Like auld King James—and they say more,  
He's o'er-indulgent to the poor,—  
Ye'd think that needna' wrang them."

Another story current in Yarrow tells how the minister's man had relentlessly turned off his master's glebe an elderly gentleman driving a young lady in a phaeton, who, to avoid the roughness of the road, had tried to drive along the adjacent field. The stranger made no remonstrance, but merely bade the man deliver his card and the lady's to his master. When next day the minister rode down to Bowhill to apologise to the duke and his daughter-in-law, Lady Dalkeith, the duke replied that he only wished he could calculate on as much faithfulness in his servants as he had found in the minister's man.

The quaintest of all these stories is connected with the most important of all Duke Henry's public acts.

In 1778, during the French war, the Duke had raised a troop, called the Buccleuch Fencibles, who were at that time in garrison in Edinburgh Castle. Going up to the Castle one day, on the parade-ground he found a country girl much perplexed as to how she was to find her brother, a recruit in the new regiment. With unaffected kindness the duke took her under his own care till the proper inquiries were made, and accompanied her himself till she had found her brother. As soon as his back was turned the lad, rather aghast, asked his sister if she knew who it was she had been speaking to. "Na! I dinna ken wha he is, but he's a vara ceevil lad."

The duke, from his position and influence, had more patronage in his hands than any other man in Scotland, except, of course, Henry Dundas, with whose political views the duke's coincided. It was to him that Scott owed his first appointment, that appointment that had so beneficent an effect on his genius, the Sherifffdom of Selkirk.

In the next generation of the family Scott was to find some of his dearest friends: it was for them and theirs that he wrote his first and best poem; to call himself their minstrel was his dearest boast.

His first intimacy with his young chief, Lord Dalkeith, and his brother (afterwards) Lord Montagu, was in circumstances worthy of the descendants of Wat of Harden and of the Bauld Buccleuch. It was their common interest in measures of defence, in the raising and drilling of volunteer corps, that first threw the young men together. A few years later the intimacy increased when Scott settled his summer home at Lasswade, in the neighbourhood of Dalkeith. It would appear that it was less the young chief who caught fire at the tales of his ancestors sung in old ballads or in Scott's own chivalrous verse than his beautiful young English wife. Harriet, Lady Dalkeith, was the daughter of Thomas

Townshend, first Viscount Sydney, who, though merely a respectable politician, has, by a curious freak of fate, secured two monuments, each bound to endure while English literature and the British Empire exist: the first British settlement in Australia, inaugurated during his tenure of the Home Secretaryship, preserves the name of Sydney; and Goldsmith has conferred immortality by a couplet in "Retaliation" describing Burke—

1 "Who, fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat  
To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote."

There was a romantic, or at least a sympathetic, vein of imagination in Lady Dalkeith, and her warmly expressed interest in all traditions connected with the Border turned the whole countryside into antiquaries and ballad-collectors. Scott's own feelings towards this lady were consciously those of a troubadour towards the lady of his service: unconsciously they had something of the devotion of a votary to a saint. It was at her request that he had tried to write a ballad on the story of Gilpin Horner, the poem that eventually wrote itself into the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.' "I don't know if ever you saw my lovely chieftainess," he wrote to Miss Seward; "if you have, you must be aware that it is impossible for any one to refuse her request, as she has more of the angel in face and temper than any one alive; so that if she had asked me to write a ballad on a broomstick, I must have attempted it." As Lockhart points out, the whole introduction to the 'Lay' is full of covert and playful allusion to this lady and her patronage of one who loved to call himself her minstrel. He was at this time contemplating the purchase of the estate of Broadmeadows, a property on Yarrow within sight of Newark and marching with the Duke's hunting-lodge, Bowhill.

1 The Rolliad also has a reference to "Sydney's sapient length of chin."

The lines—

“No !—close beneath proud Newark’s tower  
Arose the Minstrel’s lowly bower,”

while perfectly in keeping with the story to the outer world, conveyed to Scott’s friends a distinct though playful reference to his own plans.

In those days the romantic sympathies of the Dalkeiths were further kept alive by the presence in their midst of a young Oxford scholar, Mr Marriott, chaplain and tutor to young Lord Scott, the eldest son. It is unfortunate that we know Mr Marriott chiefly through his correspondence with Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. The uneasy straining after wit, the corrosive attitude towards all enthusiasm, are common to all Kirkpatrick Sharpe’s correspondents, and Marriott has not escaped the taint. It is difficult to reconcile the letters with the facts one knows about Marriott: the warm welcome that old Cyril Jackson, the Dean of Christ Church, accorded to him on the strength of the brother who preceded him,—“I am glad to have another: I like the breed”; the fact that among the idle young gentlemen at Christ Church he almost alone took honours in the classical school; the regard and confidence of people of high character and unaffected goodness like Lord and Lady Dalkeith; the friendship that caused Walter Scott to dedicate to him one of the most charming epistles in ‘Marmion’; the legacy he left the world after his early death in the saintly character of his son Charles, a leader in the Tractarian movement.

After half a year’s residence in Scotland Mr Marriott declared himself a naturalised Scotsman, wrote an address to the Muse in the old Scots metre beloved of Burns, and ventured on a humorous Border ballad to which Scott afforded the rather too indiscriminate hospitality of the fourth volume of the ‘Minstrelsy.’ Of his verses, those which are most interesting to us are some stanzas on Miss Jane Douglas’s needle-case, with all the jokes

considerately underlined. They bring us as close to the days of Nelson and Trafalgar as might some old satin ribbon with Nelson's head and a patriotic verse woven into it found in our grandmother's work-box.

"And should Buonaparté at length be so clever  
As to *thread* all our fleets with his bloodthirsty crew,  
To *run* him down quickly you first must endeavour,  
Next *hem* him in neatly and then *whip* him through.

Then let Buonaparté his myrmidons muster,  
Again let a Spanish Armada advance ;  
We'll not care a *pin* how they threaten and bluster  
While the *Needles* stand firm between England and France."

Mr Marriott had evidently a pretty wit.

Beyond the kindly goodwill that he had for all human things, there is no sign that Scott was specially a child-lover<sup>1</sup>—though a certain entry in the *Journal* makes one pause. It was in May 1828, when Scott was on his way to see the Lockharts at Brighton. His mind was full of anxiety for Johnnie Lockhart ; perhaps that opened his heart to all children. In the coach with him were "three women, the very specimens of womankind,—I mean trumpery,—a child who was sick, but afterwards looked and smiled, and *was the only thing like company*." In his works, at any rate, there is only one child on whom the author's attention dwells with a delight beyond what the story requires, the gallant figure of the young Buccleuch in the 'Lay.' This child was almost certainly drawn from little Lord Scott,—“my young chief,” as Scott loves to call him. Kirkpatrick Sharpe was at this time engaged in investigating the history of Monmouth, and Scott playfully begs that

<sup>1</sup> In contradiction to this statement there is of course Pet Marjorie. But it must be remembered that the story of the friendship between Scott and that rarest of children was told at the distance of a lifetime by a devoted elder sister to one whose tender and beautiful imagination only too readily filled up the details. So perfect a friendship with a child is characteristic of Dr John Brown, but not of Scott.



he "will not revive the story of the Black Box"—the box that, if it indeed contained proofs of Monmouth's legitimacy, would have brought about dynastic changes—"nor prove the Duke of Buccleuch lawful heir to these realms. It would grieve me to the heart to lose the privilege of being Lady Dalkeith's squire and minstrel, and of cuddling her little boys."

To which Sharpe answers with sense and grace, "But were Lord Scott a prince to-morrow, I see not why that should preclude a poet's caresses. We have so many princes and so few poets, I have an idea that the very touch of a true poet is salubrious."

This boy and his tutor were often the companions of Scott's field-sports, as the lines in the epistle recall:—

"No youthful Baron's left to grace  
The Forest-Sheriff's lonely chase,  
And ape, in manly step and tone,  
The majesty of Oberon."

Later, Scott bitterly regretted these playful lines, for by the time 'Marmion' appeared the little lad was dead. There is a pretty, brooding fancy in the sorrow of mothers that no man can understand except the one who puts into the mouth of a grief-stricken mother the words—

"Grief fills the room up of my absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words."

In his blind masculine sympathy Scott wished his verses cancelled, not realising the melancholy pleasure that they brought to the mother's heart.

In the same passage Scott has described the lady going in and out in her gentle English fashion among the cottagers at Bowhill. She made the same impression of exquisite goodness on others beside Scott. When her husband succeeded to the Queensberry estates, a neighbour at Drumlanrig expressed the general feeling: "If

every Dutchess (*sic*) is like the Dutchess of Buccleuch, I wish every female were a Dutchess. What a world it would be!" And the cynical Kirkpatrick Sharpe assents: "She is a sweet-tempered, sensible Duchess, which, because of its exteme rarity, is one of the prettiest things in the universe."

In 1812 the good Duke Henry died, and Lord Dalkeith became Duke Charles. With much of his father's benevolence he had inherited from the other side, from the stately Duchess Elizabeth, a stronger fibre; he expected from other men something of the same sense of duty as shaped his own conduct. The Duchess was always there to patronise wayward *protégés* like Hogg, of whom too much heroic virtue was not to be expected.

But in the summer of 1814 the gentle Duchess died. Scott at the time was on his Hebridean tour. At Lerwick he had written, in fine eighteenth-century heroics, a rhyming letter to his friends beginning—

"Health to the chieftain from his clansman true,  
From her true minstrel health to fair Buccleuch."

At Portrush, while dining with strangers, Scott heard in casual conversation the news that struck him to the heart. He was a Scotsman, and a Scotsman brought up in the wisdom of the eighteenth century; he was at all times prepared to meet the chances of life without complaint or dismay, but he admits to Morritt that "this is a case in which my stoicism will not serve me." He may have had a misgiving as to how so reserved a man as the Duke would meet a loss which struck at the very roots of his necessarily isolated life. This misgiving gave something of uneasiness to the letter which Scott wrote from Glasgow. It was a ceremonious age; we can discount the forms used to men of rank, for they were habitual and probably no weight on correspondence, but one cannot but feel that death too is treated with a ceremoniousness that removes both the dead and



HARRIET, DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUCH.

*From a Water-Colour by Heaphy, at Dalkeith Palace.*



the mourner to a strange, uncomfortable distance from life and friendship. It was just this distance that the Duke, in the wholly admirable letter that crossed Scott's, was anxious to break down. After describing how gently and unselfishly the Duchess had taken her good-night of the world, he goes on to make the way easy for his friend. "I will endeavour in all things to do what I know she would wish. I have therefore determined to lay myself open to all the comforts my friends can afford me. I shall be most happy to cultivate their society as heretofore. I shall love them more and more because I know they loved her. . . . You will find me tranquil and capable of going through the common occupations of society." Her last injunction had been to her husband to take care of her poor people. During the five remaining years he had to live the care of those dependent on him was the main thing that bound the Duke to life. The Ettrick Shepherd he looked on as especially *her* legacy, and soon after her death Hogg was established on the Duke's farm at Altrive. In the year of dearth in 1817, the Duke did on his estate on a large scale what Scott did at Abbotsford. When some one expressed surprise that he was not going to London that spring, he replied by showing a list of 947 day-labourers on the estate, in addition to the number normally employed. Feudalism had, at its best, its own remedies for unemployment.

Perhaps no one is more totally removed from the wholesome breath of criticism than those who are at once powerful and good. It was the finest proof of the friendship between Scott and his chief that the truth could both be told and accepted. The grounds at Bowhill were always generously open to the public, but instances of poaching and depredation on the part of Selkirk people had at one time incensed the Duke, and at the instance of one of his factors he was about to withdraw the customary privilege. Then Scott, as sheriff



of the county, pleaded the cause of the folk under his charge, remonstrated firmly and respectfully, and pointed out that the Duke was too powerful to take retributive measures. "Were your Grace really angry with them and acted accordingly, you might ultimately feel the regret of my old schoolmaster who, when he had knocked me down, apologised by saying that he did not know his own strength."

The Duke's reply is not given in Lockhart, but the occasion is clearly referred to in Scott's notice of Charles, Duke of Buccleuch, written at the time of his death. "The Duke's answer," he writes, "which conceded the point in debate began with these remarkable words: "I have reason to thank God for many things, but especially for having given me friends who will tell me the truth."

When, in 1819, the Duke died in Lisbon, Scott felt as if part of the background of his life were gone. In 1824 he writes to Lady Louisa Stuart: "I was forced the other day to go to Dalkeith by some people who wanted to see the house, and I felt as if it would have done me a great deal of good to have set my manhood aside, and to get into a corner and cry like a schoolboy. Every bit of furniture, now looking old and paltry, had some story or recollections about it, and the deserted gallery, which I have seen so happily filled, seemed waste and desolate like Moore's

'Banquet-hall deserted.'

But it avails not either sighing or moralising. To have known the good and the great, the wise and the witty, is still on the whole a pleasing reflection, though saddened by the thought that their voices are silent and their halls empty."

Sir Walter's feudal allegiance was faithfully transferred to the third generation. He watched over the Buccleuch influence at every election; he had his eye on all desir-

able pieces of land marching with the Buccleuch property that came into the market; he kept the Duke's guardian, Lord Montagu, duly informed of all that took place within the Duke's demesne. In return Lord Montagu kept him informed concerning the Duke's education, and especially consulted him about books of Scottish history for the boy's reading.

The Duke and his sisters made their home with their Uncle and Aunt Montagu, at Ditton Park, in the neighbourhood of London. Lady Louisa Stuart, a constant visitor at Ditton, gives a charming picture of the pleasant, wholesome home life of the young Ladies Scott with their uncle and aunt, Lord and Lady Montagu. Lord Montagu had a decided taste for books as well as a gift for affairs, to judge from the tenor of Sir Walter's correspondence with him.

In February 1821, when Lady Louisa was on a visit at Ditton, 'Kenilworth' was the novel of the hour. My Lord was in town attending on his duties in the House of Lords, so Lady Montagu and her nieces sat round, doubtless with sewing in their hands, while Lady Louisa read aloud. "Certainly we all sat up to a most undue hour for two nights running, unable to leave it." That might have occurred—probably did occur—in a hundred other houses, for the excellent habit of reading aloud seems to have prevailed in most cultivated English homes at the period. But there were probably few where the next morning was spent in a wonderful old library, "poking out all the old documents"—the Secret Memoirs that dealt with Leicester and the scandals of his life. Scott had all a bibliophile's interest in this library at Ditton, and was very jealous over Lady Louisa's feminine principle of judging of books by their literary rather than their bibliographical value.

The Montagus, as well as Lady Louisa, were of course in the secret of the 'Waverleys,' but so perfect was the reticence on both sides that, when the secret was

publicly divulged, the real surprise was that each had known it so long. The young Ladies Scott had their suspicions, of course, and hit on an innocent and pretty trap for the good Sir Walter. He came to Ditton for a flying visit in this same February 1821. "We wanted to ask him if he had read 'Kenilworth,'" writes Lady Louisa, "but nobody would hang the bell round the cat's neck: however, the Ladies Scott, who have christened their little sister Flibbertigibbet, called her so to his face, and he said it was 'a vary gude name.'" The story gives one incidentally the measure of Sir Walter's Scottish speech.

In August 1826 Sir Walter was the young Duke's guest at Drumlanrig, a place of many memories.

"God bless him," he writes, "his father and I loved each other well, and his beautiful mother had as much of the angel as it is permitted to walk this earth. I see the balcony from which—in 1813—they welcomed poor Charlotte and me, long ere the ascent was surmounted, streaming out their white handkerchiefs from the battlements. There were *four* merry people that day—now one sad individual is all that remains."

"I trust this young nobleman will be

'A hedge about his friends,  
A heckle to his foes.'"

In the previous winter, when Sir Walter's losses were in all men's mouths, wild rumours were afloat. "It is reported," writes Willie Laidlaw to his brothers, "that the young Duke of Buccleugh has written him offering to take the whole loss on himself, and to pay the interest of Sir Walter's debts until he comes of age. If that be true, Sir Walter should accept for the Duke's own sake. . . ." So naturally and nobly thought the young Duke, when in sober seriousness he made the offer, but so naturally and nobly too Sir Walter could not be brought to think. Pecuniary

obligations stand in a category by themselves — a prohibitory category. In the seventeenth century the Laird of Branksome might, nay, *must*, hazard life and limb merely to restore Jamie Telfer's kye; in the nineteenth the richest and most generous of his descendants must not intervene to save from the cruel sap of labour and anxiety the finest brain and stoutest heart that the clan is ever likely to produce in all the centuries of time. And our inmost convictions consent that this must be so.

Up to the last of life Scott's affection and interest revived at any mention of Buccleuch. There is nothing in his whole history more touching and more characteristic than some of the incidents of his stay in Rome, — incidents which curiously illustrate the fundamental qualities of his heart. We owe them to the sympathetic observation of a Mr Cheney, a friend of the Macleans of Torloisk, who showed Scott much attention.

It would have been sufficient introduction to Sir Walter that Mr Cheney happened to be the owner of the villa at Frascati in which the Cardinal of York had lived. For to Scott Rome was less the home of the Cæsars than the last refuge of the Stuarts; his first walk was to their tombs in St Peter's, one of his earliest expeditions to the villa at Frascati. He must often have heard Lord Montagu tell of the visit that he, when making the "grand tour" as a young man in 1803, had paid to the Cardinal at the villa. The old man, standing among a gathering of priests, had received the young strangers courteously, and had been pleased to hear that they were Scottish. It seems strange that the name Buccleuch did not convey a livelier interest to the descendant of Mary Stuart. Either Scotland and the dream of royalty had grown dim to the old Churchman, or the prudence of an exile concealed warmer feelings. When he dismissed them he said, "Remember me to all friends" — a gentle

message to Scotland from the last descendant of her kings. One would like to think that Scott at Frascati told this incident to Mr Cheney.

Faithful affection was the last and strongest of Scott's instincts. All through his life his feeling to the Buccleuch family had been compounded of feudal loyalty and personal attachment. It extended to every member of the family. He was too ill to do much sight-seeing in Rome. "Infirmity," he said, "had checked his curiosity." When his daughter visited the Protestant cemetery to see the grave of her friend Lady Charlotte Stopford, he could not accompany her, but remained with Mr Cheney in the carriage. "'I regret,' he said, 'that I cannot go. It would have been a satisfaction to me to have seen the place where they have laid her. She is the child of a Buccleuch; he, you know, is my chief, and all that comes from that house is dear to me.' He looked on the ground and sighed, and for a moment there was a silence betwixt us."



## FRANCES, LADY DOUGLAS.

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IN the society of the mid-eighteenth century,—the society that lodged between Bloomsbury and Portman Square, Hyde Park Corner and Whitehall, and, fortunately for us, invited Horace Walpole to its parties,—in that intimate, witty, frivolous society certain strident feminine voices with a strong family likeness overtop the general hum of conversation. A society, however exclusive and fashionable, that is made up of kinsfolk and social equals, is sure to deal in nicknames, and the four ladies who owned the voices were known as “the screaming sisterhood” or “the bawling Campbells.” Such in their maturity were the children whom Scott sketches, lightly but charmingly, in the ‘Heart of Mid-Lothian,’ the children of John, the Great Duke of Argyle, and of Jane Warburton his wife. These shrill voices, with their burden of gossip and censure, still echo in the letters of Horace Walpole and, more articulately, in the recently published Memoir written by the ladies’ finely observant, incisive cousin, Lady Louisa Stuart. It is she who tells us that Lord Strafford, the husband of the mildest and fairest of the sisters, used to say: “I can always tell whether any of *my* ladies are in a house by the time I set my foot in the porter’s hall.” To Horace Walpole we owe an anecdote of another of the

brothers-in-law, Charles Townshend, the second husband of the eldest sister, Lady Greenwich. When his mother-in-law, the old Duchess of Argyle, was "bawling" to deaf Lady Suffolk, he called out in the very same tone, "Large stewing oysters"—the cry of the Billingsgate oyster-women. Of the matter conveyed in these high voices Lady Louisa tells us that youth with its follies, its high feathers, and other changing fashions, was the constant subject of their shrill censure. Horace Walpole—who writes with what one feels to be a kindred animus—describes "certain hags who bestow Sunday mornings on church and the rest of the year on scandal, malice, envy, and lies about their neighbour," and adds, "Three of these pious furies are sisters, and their names are Tisiphone, Megæra, and Alecto." He excepts Lady Strafford, the wife of his friend: the other three are Lady Greenwich, whom he elsewhere calls "that shrill Morning Post, Lady Greenwich"; Lady Betty Mackenzie, of whom Mrs Anne Pitt used to say, "Lady Betty takes the liberty of telling one in society that one lies and that one is a fool, and I can't say I find it agreeable"; and finally, Lady Mary Coke, whose colossal self-importance produced her own voluminous Journal and Lady Louisa's sparkling pages.

Yet from such kinsfolk and from such a society came one of the most loved and valued of Sir Walter's friends, one of the best and wisest and wittiest of women.

Lady Caroline Campbell (later Lady Greenwich) had as a girl been married to the heir of the Buccleuchs, the young Lord Dalkeith. She was rich, prosperous, and fortunate in a dull, silent, but gentle husband, who gave her her way in all things. Lord Dalkeith died before he had had time to give any other proof of his quality than this generous affection for his young wife. There were three children of his mar-

riage—the young Duke (then Lord Dalkeith), Mr Campbell Scott, a boy of bright promise who died young, and a posthumous daughter called Frances, after her father.

When this child was only four years old her mother married the brilliant wit and politician, Charles Townshend. Charles Townshend flashes through the Parliamentary history of the time like a meteor, or, to vary the metaphor, adorns it like a weather-cock. No page in Walpole's 'Letters' is so vivid as that which describes his last amazing speech, delivered half-drunk: "It was a torrent of wit, ridicule, vanity, lies, and beautiful language, . . . a wonderful blaze kindled by half a bottle of champagne on genuine genius." Horace Walpole was always a hostile critic of his Townshend cousins, yet in another place he says of Charles Townshend: "He seemed to create knowledge instead of searching for it, with a wit so abundant that with him it seemed loss of time to think." Burke pays a generous tribute to his wit and charm, calling him "the delight and ornament of this House, and the charm of every society that he honoured with his presence."

Lady Louisa Stuart, with her inimitable gift of hitting off a character in fewest words, writing of his "gay, careless, volatile, inconsiderate private life," adds this saving clause: "He had one of those happy tempers which nothing can ruffle; without a grain of sternness, nor of pride nor of resentment. Ready to laugh with anybody or at anything, he poured out wit in torrents, and it was so much the worse for truth if ever truth stood in wit's way." With his eloquence, his lack of courage, his political treachery, we have nothing to do in this place; our concern is with the fact that one of the societies that he loved to "honour with his presence" was the nursery of a neglected little girl of four, to whom he appeared

at once as a radiant guardian angel and an incomparable playfellow. It was an age of severe nursery discipline, and a casual observer like Dr Carlyle of Inveresk noticed, on the visit the family paid to Dalkeith, how the kind, merry stepfather stood between the little girl and maternal harshness. Lady Dalkeith had no motherly ways. Even Lady Mary Coke, no tender-hearted woman, expresses her surprise at her sister's neglect of her three Townshend children. "I am sorry," she writes, "that my sister Greenwich" (it was in 1769, when Townshend was Chancellor of the Exchequer, that he obtained a peerage, to be held by his wife and her Townshend children after her) "sees so little of her children: Miss Townshend is never with her but one hour of the day, and Master Townshend never." Yet those later children were extolled as pretty and engaging, whereas Lady Dalkeith's resentment of her elder daughter's lack of grace amounted to one of those unnatural animosities which shock us as contrary to universal instinct. But to Charles Townshend, who needed something to caress and make a plaything of, the child's little, roundabout figure, wise merry face, loving temper, and precocious sense of humour,—Dr Carlyle remarked Lady Frances's pleasant vein of ridicule when she was quite young,—made the little stepdaughter the dearest companion of his leisure. A love of imparting information was one of the anomalies of Townshend's character; the child had quick parts and a sound judgment; her gratitude and loving heart made her an apt pupil; he loved to have her read to him, directed her studies, reasoned with her as with an equal, till from a plaything she became his confidential friend. When she was only fifteen she would eagerly await his return from the House of Commons to learn the results of a division, or would sit a silent, eager-eyed listener when his friends were with him, or would work by the hour as his confidential secretary. It was characteristic of her modesty and

good sense that this early initiation into politics made her in later life averse to political discussion. She had too much knowledge not to dread the violently expressed opinions and prejudices of political ladies on either side. There is a picture of Lady Frances and her brothers painted by Sir Joshua when she must have been about twelve years old. The boys, tall and well-bred, are standing in much the same attitude as the two Friends in Sir Joshua's masterpiece in the National Gallery, but the chief interest in the picture lies in the sturdy little figure in a blue velvet frock at the right of the group. Her hand is clasped in her elder brother's, and something in the attitudes and in the almost motherly expression of the wise little face suggests how closely the young group clung to one another. Probably the death of Mr Campbell Scott drew the bond even closer between the other two. The Duke, as we have seen, married as soon as he came of age, and in the autumn of 1767 the young Duke and Duchess and still younger Lady Frances visited their unknown native land, and shyly and dutifully, and a little formally, began to keep their state at Dalkeith. The death of Charles Townshend in the following autumn affected the brother and sister very differently. To him it meant freedom to pursue his own private but public-spirited course of life without argument or remonstrance; to her it meant a sudden and complete blank of all that made her home life tolerable. Her aunt, Lady Mary Coke, was her capricious friend and patroness. At one moment she would sit up with her niece over her bedroom fire as if they were schoolgirls; at another it was whispered among the relations that Lady Mary had scolded Lady Frances into hysterics, and that Lady Greenwich had thereupon had a battle-royal with her sister.

Half the best fairy tales begin with two half-sisters, of whom one is caressed and spoilt and the other oppressed



and disdained. It is only when the pair are sent out into the world that the sense and sweetness of the forlorn maiden lead her to the happy possession of a kingdom, while the airs and graces of her sister are rightly rewarded by a hovel. Lady Frances was not beautiful: Lady Mary Coke laments her want of height; Horace Walpole, who singles her out for esteem from all her kin, admits as much. The best evidence for the fact is her own merry answer to a professed admirer of her beauty:—

“Your eyesight!—but no more of that!  
For what though I be short and fat  
If you believe me tall?  
If love can change grey eyes to blue  
I need not rail, where thanks are due,  
Nor Cupid blear-eyed call.”

Her half-sister, Miss Townshend, was a recognised belle; Lady Louisa Stuart describes her as silly, her folly taking the form of thinking every man in love with her. This foolishness culminated in a runaway marriage with a handsome, impecunious Irishman. She will come again into the story, a rather sorry figure, hanging on anxiously to the life of fashion and pleasure, first in Dublin and then in Bath.

Fortunately Lady Frances was independent of her mother's house for a home, having inherited a house of her own at Petersham and an independent income from her aunt, Lady Jane Scott. At the age of thirty-two she might in those days fairly consider herself a single woman, and moved about with considerable freedom. Dalkeith was the home of her heart. The Duchess of Buccleuch seems to have been one of the reserved, rather formal women who are formidable to the outside world but dearly loved and absolutely trusted by her nearer circle. To a hostess of this character, with a houseful of changing guests, it was a boon to have

as her right hand one whom a fellow-guest thus portrays :—

“The Lady Frances, whose sweet manners,  
Good-humour, talents, ready wit  
All ages charm, all fancies hit.”

This best of sisters-in-law was also the most affectionate of aunts, speaking of the reigning baby as “ours,” and boasting of its performances with all a mother’s fondness and all an aunt’s effrontery! Even when Lady Frances’s life seemed to resolve itself into an untiring pursuit of pleasure, it was always, by a happy accident, other people’s pleasure. In 1782 she spent a winter in Dublin. Lady Portarlington (Lady Louisa Stuart’s sister and correspondent) describes her cousin as being much “*recherchée & fêtée*,” and attributes her enjoyment of the situation to her having been so much mortified and neglected at home. On her side Lady Frances considered that Lady Portarlington had allowed herself to slip too much out of society, and made it one of her objects to get to know all the best people in Dublin, that she might introduce them to her cousin. She carried secret benevolence as well as beaming enjoyment with her to the half-dozen parties which shared her every day and night between them. “I am determined to study both punctuality and acceptability,” she writes, being anxious both to do credit to her English friends at the Viceregal Lodge and to please her warm-hearted Irish entertainers. When Lord North’s resignation and Lord Rockingham’s advent to power brought the Duke of Portland as the new Lord-Lieutenant to Ireland, Lady Frances stayed on in Dublin because she truly thought that her knowledge of Irish society and her popularity would be of use to her friend the Duchess,—a woman whose gravity, sincerity, and general superiority rather unsuited her for the important trivialities of a Viceregal Court.

But the main business that had brought Lady Frances and her brother the Duke to Dublin was neither pleasure nor politics, but the affairs of the poor little half-sister and her fatuous husband. He had (like a true Irishman) resented being "banished to his native land," and had almost challenged the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Carlisle, for his supposed inattention to his claims. It required all the Duke's influence with his friend, the Lord-Lieutenant, all Lady Frances's persuasive tact with the foolish couple, to save the situation. Lady Frances found the poor, pretty young matron in just such a household as Fielding might describe: a coach and two men in smart liveries, a dirty house, and the lady herself in a soiled morning gown and cap, and chiefly preoccupied with her husband's claim to a baronetage dormant in his family. Lady Frances did what she could; persuaded her brother to give his half-sister a court-gown, had her presented, distributed presents at a christening that shortly ensued, and required all her natural prudence to restrain her impulse to adopt the poor pock-marked, neglected elder child, because his good-humoured little face appealed to her tenderness.

Lady Frances had heartily enjoyed her "rakeing," as she called living in a whirl, to which our modern dissipation seems tranquillity; but she kept her "raptures" for her solitary tour in Wales, for moonlit rambles and "romantic" views of ruins and cascades. Yet this woman, who was the delight of every society which she came into, who turned everything (even her own appearance!) into a jest or a stanza, who loved nature and children, nor scorned the delights of print-shops and Irish linens,—this buoyant creature had another side to her nature. Perhaps all creators of merriment pay their price of solitary sadness. She, at least, knew what it was to sit in the shadow as well as to prank it in the sunshine. In a volume of occa-

sional verses by various hands, the harvest of happy visits at Dalkeith, the verses in which "Delia" compliments, torments, and laughs at her lovers (and herself) are gayest and cleverest of all. Then all at once comes this sad and sincere cry, like the sob at the end of a child's burst of laughter:—

#### A CHARACTER.

"When the sun shines out bright  
I am merry and light,  
I talk and I laugh like a fool ;  
Then wise folk think I'm mad  
And can never be sad,  
I am wild as a boy broke from school.  
Then comes a chilly, windy, lowering day,  
The clouds hang low and I am dark as they ;  
Through a black mist all earthly joys I see,  
Or think at least they were not made for me.  
Oh rectify, good Heaven, my wavering mind !  
Let it not be the sport of every wind.  
Let me—alas ! I know not what to pray,  
Let me be blessed, Heaven only knows the way."

To realise how amply her life was to be "blessed" the story must go back many years, and turn to a different group of people. There is a perennial fascination in tales of the rightful heir who, in spite of fate and the machinations of lawyers, comes into his own again. No tale of the "wandering heir" in the *Waverley Novels*, neither the 'Antiquary' nor 'Guy Mannering' nor 'Redgauntlet,' is more full of romantic interest than the Great Douglas Cause, which in the middle of the eighteenth century agitated society and divided Scotland into two hostile camps. Had the events only occurred a century earlier, and had the story only reached Sir Walter by tradition,—as did the tragedy of the 'Bride of Lammermoor,'—what a novel could have been made out of it ! Then we should

have had that great desideratum from his pen, the portrait of a magnificent old Scottish lady, as generous a benefactress as MacCallum More was a benefactor, a woman as witty and free of speech as Mr Counsellor Pleydell, a partisan as generous and resolute as Meg Merrilies herself,—Margaret, the first and last Duchess of Douglas!

There are passages in the earlier chapters of the story of this historic Cause more in Fielding's manner than in Scott's. A shabby little volume may still be picked up on bookstalls containing the letters of Lady Jane Douglas<sup>1</sup> to her husband, Sir John Stewart, then living within the Rules of the King's Bench, while she with her two little sons was forlornly and bravely fighting fortune in Edinburgh. The harshness of circumstance, the indomitable, gentle patience of the lady, the small sums saved from her meals to provide little comforts for his, are all in Fielding's vein.

A child, especially an unhappy child, has a tenacious memory, and probably five-year-old Archibald never forgot the black days when he refused to leave his dead mother's body, nor the helpless misery of the moment when he was dragged from the mourning-coach that followed her hearse. His uncle, the Duke of Douglas, had consented to bear the expense of the funeral to Holyrood, but forbade the one small mourner to accompany it.

As in a romance, friends were raised up for the boy: a certain lady Schaw received him into her house and brought him up as her own till Duchess Margaret came on the scene and espoused his cause so warmly that for some months she was estranged completely from the wayward Duke, her husband.

<sup>1</sup> Any one wishing to know the real "inwardness" of the Douglas Trial should eschew all recent presentments of the story and try to procure this collection of letters. They will convince him, as they convinced Carlyle, "that it was impossible that *such* a Lady Jane was capable of any baseness or deliberate mendacity whatever."



Besides her sense of justice and her affection for her husband's nephew, "Duchess Peggie" had a strong motive in her desire to read a lesson to the Duchess of Hamilton, the mother of the other claimant of the heirship. Years after the Cause was won and the rightful heir established in his place, Lady Harriet Don quoted to Lady Louisa Stuart the old Duchess's account of her visit to the beautiful Gunning.

"She found her lolling in her usual nonchalant fashion upon a settee and beating the devil's tatoo with one leg over the other. Down she set herself opposite and tried to enter into conversation, till at last, tired with the other's careless, contemptuous manner and impatient answers, 'I looked,' said she, 'in her face and thought to myself, "Ay, play awa' wi' that bonny fit and show your leg, and what a bonny ankle ye ha'e. Gif my Duke were alive it micht cast dust in his e'en, but I'm a woman like yersel', and I'll gar ye rue your wagging your fit at me."'"

Probably no private event ever caused so much excitement as the judgment of the Lords in the Douglas Cause. The decision was announced amid acclamation in the London Opera House; half an hour after the news arrived in Edinburgh, windows were illuminated—and windows were broken!

Mr Douglas's later life proves that Sir Walter's instinct was right when he made the hero of romantic circumstance by no means necessarily a man of romantic disposition. Mr Douglas settled down to the public honours and duties, the private courtesies and kindnesses of a country gentleman very much as we are sure Harry Bertram and Lord Glenallan did also, only a certain quiet intensity of feeling distinguishing him from men of the same calibre whose youth had been less troubled. London made much of the "hero of the hour"; she did better than she meant when she furnished him, amid the most artificial surroundings, with a love-affair as fresh and sweet as any village green could afford. "I shall always love this place,"

lovely Lady Lucy Graham used to say of Almack's, "for it was here my dearest Mr Douglas first came up and asked me to dance." The young couple were at one in their love for a retired life, and spent the short happy years of their married state at his Castles of Douglas or Bothwell. There Lady Frances was often their guest, coming more than once when Lady Lucy's delicate health demanded the kindest and most entertaining companionship. A fortnight after Lady Frances had left her friend in the early spring of 1780 came the sorrowful news of her death.

Old fashions lingered long in the house of Douglas. The old Duchess had been the last of the nobility to travel through the country with halberdiers; Mr Douglas must have been among the last to have his rooms draped in black in sign of mourning. When he took his black-robed little son to the funeral—"that he might never forget his mother"—he may have remembered the day when another child, rudely shaken and forlorn, had seen through tears *his* mother's funeral train leaving the poor lodging in the Cross Causeway.

So poignant had been Lady Frances's grief for her friend, that when eighteen months later she came suddenly across Mr Douglas at the house of Lord Hopetoun, she could hardly recover her composure. Three years later, to the satisfaction of all his friends, and not least to that of Lady Lucy's parents,—the old Duke and Duchess of Montrose,—Lady Frances became Mr Douglas's wife. She whose heart had been drawn to the little pock-marked Irish nephew, whose walks in Wales had been accompanied by a gaily-chatting train of ragged children, was to have her hands and heart filled with four children, three boys and—blessed gift!—a little girl whose soft brown eyes and pencilled eyebrows recalled her sweet dead mother.

Lady Frances could make a jest even of her position as stepmother. In her 'Cinderella,' a pretty piece

of mixed verse and prose written after her marriage, occur the lines:—

“She his unhappy daughter, too,  
Treated as all stepmothers do !  
For from the Flood to this our day  
All have been bad alike, they say.”

Years afterwards, when quite an old woman, one step-daughter could never speak of “my more than mother” without emotion.

The glimpses we have henceforth of Lady Douglas—her husband was created Baron Douglas of Douglas in 1790—are chiefly as the dispenser of a delightful hospitality at Bothwell Castle. She had a hostess’s best gift, unaffected zest in all that was going on. The vitality which made her endow those she met with admirable, original, or at least whimsical qualities, might have led into caprice and disillusionment a woman with less fairness of mind and warmth of heart: with Lady Douglas it merely kept alive a delightful sense of social adventure in her everyday life.

It was to this love of fun and sense of adventure that Lady Douglas owed one of her most valued friendships, that with Mr Morritt of Rokeby.

Time: a wet afternoon in the summer of 1800. Scene: the inn at Lowood, Windermere; upstairs Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart trying to write letters, the young ladies looking out of the window and speculating on the owners of carriages and portmanteaux; downstairs the distinguished Mr Morritt, a Greek traveller and Homeric critic, and a party of University friends; between both, and equally at home with both, Lady Douglas’s dog, Mr Tippits.

The party below stairs, at a loose end, writes a poem addressed to Mr Tippits on the shutter of the public room; Lady Louisa upstairs writes a reply which Lady Douglas ties round Mr Tippits’ neck, and downstairs

trots the innocent go-between. Shouts of laughter downstairs; upstairs the girls in ecstasies over "Mama's impudence," and Lady Louisa in her corner summing up the situation in her lively way. She complains that her friends have forced her

"To join them in tricks I would colour to own once,  
By dogs sending verses to men—and unknown ones!  
Through Abigails watching where gentlemen sup,  
And list'ning at wainscots to pick a word up."

How good is the echo of laughter even a century old!

The spirit of the age, the conflict between the new romantic spirit and the elegant conventions of the eighteenth century, was amusingly reflected in the life at Bothwell. In the 'Bothwell Poetry Book,' the "Lines to Delia" and didactic epigram gradually yield to mock heroic ballads and ghostly legends in "Monk" Lewis vein: in the same way, while the old castle close to the modern house was *the* feature in the romantic landscape, the ruins were decorated with trim flowers and creepers—to the distress of the Wordsworths, who visited the place as undistinguished but very discriminating tourists,—and a walk led through a wood to a rural summer-house, the scene of many a gay little *fête*. There Mary Berry was beguiled on a summer night to find a little supper spread and her cipher in an illumination over the door. Never did the mossy walls echo lighter laughter than one summer day in 1802. The Comte d'Artois and his suite were paying a visit to Bothwell. Most of the men, French and Scottish, had gone shooting—doubtless with those long-barrelled guns familiar to us in prints; but two had preferred to accompany Lady Douglas and her niece Lady Harriet Montagu to the summer-house. One of the French guests, Monsieur de Puységur, had the inimitable gift of talking nonsense with grace, abandon, and just a touch of pathos. He was enchanted with the cottage,



and pictured himself living there with a *bonne paysanne* for his wife and lots of children. A girl he had met in the Highlands would be beautiful enough; but then, he reflected, she wouldn't be simple enough, having lived in an inn! He could jest at his own homeless and landless condition; he had tried to buy a sentry-box in Edinburgh "*pour avoir un bien à moi.*" Like a light-hearted, gallant Frenchman, he declared that he left bits of his heart wherever he went, like a sheep leaving a little wool on every bush. "Then we are out of luck to come at the end," cries my Lady Douglas. "O, cela ne fait rien, il en recroit toujours." How courtly and sweet under Scottish trees must the good French tongue—edged with compliment and pointed with wit—have sounded to the accompaniment of womanly laughter. "I ached all over with laughing," writes Lady Harriet.

When "Monk" Lewis came to stay, a Banshee was set up in the old castle; but when Walter Scott, advocate, was a guest, Romance in person came to stay at Bothwell. In 1799 he was, as he himself describes it, "like a pedlar setting up business on two ballads"; but he carried in his head and on that wondrous tongue of his all the ballads of the 'Minstrelsy,' all that mass of curious lore which he had drawn from tradition, from law studies, and from boundless reading,—all the romance of his native land, all the humours of her people.

Lady Douglas had met him at Dalkeith; and, as Dalkeith and Bothwell shared all their good things, had invited him to be her guest. The fragment of a ballad which was to tell of "Bothwell's sisters three" was begun to please his kind hosts. To this same listening party he must have told the tale of that traveller of the fifteenth century who, in a town in the Holy Land, heard a woman singing to her babe in the Scottish tongue, "Bothwell's banks are blooming fair."

One morning was spent in an excursion to Craignethan,



another ruined castle on Lord Douglas's property, afterwards to become famous as the original of Tullietudlem. Perhaps Walter Scott already heard the tramp of victorious Covenanters up the avenue, and marked the pantry window from which the scalding brose descended on Cuddie Headrigg. He had a way of becoming abstracted in striking scenes. "The poet," writes Lockhart, "expressed such rapture with the scenery, that his hosts urged him to accept for his lifetime the use of a small habitable house enclosed within the circuit of the ancient walls." One can imagine the idea of securing such a neighbour flashing into kind Lady Douglas's imagination, and the frank courtesy with which Lord Douglas would second the suggestion. The offer was not at once declined; but the Sheriffship of Selkirkshire, to which Scott was appointed the next year, put it out of the question. One cannot regret that it was Tweed and not Clyde that received from Scott "that reverence which the Scotch pay to their distinguished rivers,"—the reverence that rang in Bailie Nicol Jarvie's voice when he said, "That's the Forth."

A pleasant imagination connects Bothwell with one of Scott's most spirited bits of poetry. Perhaps no other narrative poem starts with so happy a line as "Nine-and-twenty knights of fame." So entirely satisfied is the ear that no one asks, "Why precisely *nine-and-twenty*"? Now, in the stables at Bothwell Castle the stalls amount to the same unaccountable number. It is a fanciful conjecture, but one to be gladly entertained, that Scott, with his mind already possessed with the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' may have strolled into the stables of the Castle and noticed the feudal accommodation there. So the spirited ring of the syllables, "Nine-and-twenty stalls" of some answering groom, falling on his outward ear sang itself to the inward sense into the martial music that we know.

From this time (1799) till her death in 1817, Lady

Douglas was among Scott's dearest friends. If she was not so much his correspondent as Lady Louisa, it was probably because a family of twelve children and step-children and a wide circle of friends must have kept her pen busy. There is just a suspicion that such perfect sweetness of temper as was hers paid the price of its quality in a touch of indolence. "Lady Douglas cannot be far off when laziness is mentioned," writes Lady Louisa playfully; and Lady Mary Coke declares that it was her niece's one failing. Two gay and gracious notes to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe make one long to have more of her letters.

When she died in 1817, at the age of sixty-eight, to many who loved her half of life's pleasant things died with her. Thenceforth Lady Louisa could never speak of her except as *her* and *she*, and then only to Lady Douglas's own children,—among her *own* children we must include her step-daughters, Lady Montagu, who was as much the child of her heart as Caroline, Lady Scott, who was her child after the flesh.

Those who have laughed with us and made us glad are secure of the happiest immortality: when the first sharp sorrow is past, we needs must remember and remind one another of ways and words and little precious characteristics. Writing to Lord Montagu after Lady Douglas's death, Scott recalls her happy in her garden in a checked apron, or masquerading as a Banshee, yet adds that the great and majestic Lady would be resumed the next moment.

Is it possible that the image of Lady Douglas's life, unconsciously creeping into Sir Walter's "study of imagination," helped to mould the most admirable of all his feminine creations, the character of Jeanie Deans? The suggestion is startling, but it comes from the pen of Lady Louisa Stuart, whose discernment is rarely at fault, and whose use of language was sober and deliberate. She is writing—and it is the finest of all her

letters—her impressions of the ‘Heart of Mid-Lothian.’ She congratulates Scott on having effected what many had tried to do, and nobody had succeeded in—making the perfectly good character the most interesting,—and she goes on thus:—

“Is it possible that you had at all in your eye what my wishes pointed to, when I wrote to you last winter? If not, you will think the question strange; yet, with all the differences of situation, improvement, refinement, &c., nay, with all the power to charm and dazzle, there was a strong likeness of character: the same steady attachment to rectitude, the same simplicity and singleness of heart, the same inward humility, the same forgetfulness of self, the same strong, plain, straightforward understanding always hitting exactly right. . . . Let me dream that you designed this resemblance, whether you did or not. . . . I would like it all the better for being so veiled by circumstances that the rest of the world would pass it by without observation.”

If Lady Louisa is right, if Jeanie Deans, the peasant woman, the tutelary saint of Presbyterian Scotland, is indeed drawn from the daughter of a ducal house, brought up in the gay world of the sceptical eighteenth century, may we not claim that Sir Walter’s creation was not only true to the eternally best type of womanly goodness, but of goodness of a specifically Scottish character?

## LADY LOUISA STUART.

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IN the correspondence of Madame de Villars, a contemporary of Madame de Sévigné, a sentence describes the stupendous ennui of the Royal Palace of Madrid: "L'ennui est affreux; il me semble qu'on le sent, qu'on le voit, qu'on le touche tant il est répandu, épais." "Apply this where you please," writes Lady Louisa Stuart — "half in the vapours" — to her sister Lady Caroline Dawson, in the year of our Lord 1781, and of her age twenty-three, dating from the family seat of Luton, in the fat, loamy county of Northamptonshire. "Our magnificent barns," she writes again, with a sort of shiver, of the classical mansion which the Brothers Adam had built for Lord Bute — a patron of Scottish architects, as he was of Scottish poets and painters.

The details of the life at Luton make the eighteenth-century distaste for a country life not wholly incomprehensible. In summer, — the dusty summer of the flat midlands, — "we spend the day," writes Lady Louisa, "trailing to the farm and dawdling to the flower-garden." When winter and the early hour of dinner made the evenings interminable, Lady Bute would retire with my lord to the library, and Lady Louisa prepared tea in her room for two brothers, who yawned in her face, and spoke perhaps six sentences during the evening.

Such was the poisoned atmosphere that Lord Bute carried with him into retirement after his brief and unmerited day of power. His moods, his hypochondria, his suppressed rage where politics were concerned, his sensitiveness to attack, made variable weather in the stately home. At the same time, Lady Bute's shyness and ill-health and Lord Bute's pride of birth prevented free intercourse with neighbours or easy hospitality to guests. In her old age Lady Louisa declared that "pride of birth makes dull people duller." She certainly did not formulate such a thought in her silent youth, but she could not remember the time when she did not reflect, and the Bute household invited such criticism.

On the few guests who were invited the place had the same chilling effect as on Lord Bute's family, but the host himself could affect a more cheerful demeanour, while his genuine interest in his library and garden supplied him with conversation.

Miss Eleanor Elliot — herself a delightful member of the affectionate, quick-witted family of Minto — writes in 1775 of a visit to Luton: "This is the finest and most expensive palace I have ever seen; it has a melancholy grandeur that is inexpressible." Lord Bute's fall from power had given him a horror of society, and at this date the Elliots were the only people, except his own family, who had seen the costly fabric. He himself had a touch of melancholy romance, much to Miss Elliot's taste, but she admits that "disgust with the ingratitude of the world has made him savage, and the family when with him in the country take the colour of their minds from his." Naturally the object of all the family was to escape from home as quickly as they might. Lady Mary, marrying in the heyday of her father's power, had her soul satiated with wealth and self-importance as the wife of the notorious Sir James Lowther, later Lord Lonsdale; Lady Jane married Sir James (after-





LADY LOUISA STUART.

*From a Miniature by Mrs Mee, in the possession of Lord Ranfurly.*



wards Lord) Macartney; the dull, self-important brothers were out in the world in the fashionable services, diplomacy and the army.

The happiest friendship any woman can enjoy is one with "the sister next to herself in age." Fortunately Lady Louisa's "next sister" was a gifted and beautiful creature. Mrs Delany's Letters give a pleasant picture of Lady Bute bringing her two youngest daughters to wait upon her old friend. It is natural that shy Lady Louisa passed unnoticed, but Lady Caroline's "genius" for painting and music is praised, and her sweet voice, only spoilt by her little trick of unnecessary laughter. In 1779 she had made a love-match with Mr Dawson, the eldest son of an Irish peer, Lord Carlow, and had gone to the sister island to win Irish hearts and to struggle with Irish poverty.

In long intimate letters to Lady Caroline,<sup>1</sup> Lady Louisa poured out her discontent with home, her weariness of the conventional gaieties of London, her heartache, and the mismanagement that wrecked her young years. But even from this sympathetic sister she kept secret one large part of her experience, her eager, thwarted intellectual life, the books she read, the poetry she wrote, the dreams of a vivid imagination, the judgments of an acute critical mind.

One romantic enthusiasm indeed Lady Louisa shared with this artistic sister, the love of wild and beautiful scenery. Writing from Buxton, at the age of eighty, of her delight in mountain scenery, she says: "Though I was certainly a grown woman before I ever saw rock or moor, yet they seem native to me, and I felt at home as soon as I got to Buxton." It was when she was twenty-two that she and her mother escaped for a week or two from Luton to Lady Bute's own inheritance at Wharncliffe, and lived blissfully in the plain little lodge among

<sup>1</sup> Mr Dawson succeeded to his father as Lord Carlow in 1779. In 1785 he was created Earl of Portarlington.

rocks and trees. Perhaps Rousseau's influence told for something in Lady Louisa's delight in the small bare rooms and the freedom of taking long walks in a short skirt,—she read 'La Nouvelle Héloïse' that winter with eager admiration,—but the cult of "romantic prospects" and picturesque ruins was in full swing a generation before Wordsworth and Scott put spiritual interpretation or romantic associations into them.

The children of Lord Bute had the misfortune to call Lady Mary Wortley Montagu grandmother. That lady's vanity, eccentricity, and self-will had made the name of "wit" a terror and a mockery to all the young Stuarts. The male portion of the family lost no opportunity of inveighing brutally or jocosely against "blue-stockings." Louisa, a good deal the youngest of the family, was the only one with brains. When she was only eight years old her cousin Lady Mary Coke records that "Lady Bute's youngest daughter is a wonderful child, already engaged on writing a play on the Roman subject of Jugurtha." (Unfortunately Lady Mary Coke's own egotism and conceit and absurdity were beacons to scare any young woman from the pursuit of letters.) Louisa early learnt to conceal the sufferings that a sensitive, gifted child endures in the rough-and-tumble of a large, healthy, stupid family. She reconciled herself to her detested sewing—in the sorrows of later life she was, like many a simpler woman, to find comfort in her "seam,"—and managed to carry herself, her Plutarch and Clarendon, her romantic dreams of her unvisited native land, and her habit of scribbling, to a little sanctum four feet by eight.

Perhaps no one has such vivid experiences as a gifted child growing up in a repressive, formal home; chance kindnesses, rare amusements, are so eagerly enjoyed, and there are so many vacant hours in which to dream them over afterwards.

When Lady Louisa was a little girl of nine she fell in love at first sight with an older girl who came in one

evening to drink tea with her sisters, a girl of sixteen, but dressed in a womanly suit of mourning,—a girl with a short, round figure and kind merry face, who said something to set her a-laughing, and flirted a black crape fan in her face. “I thought I had never seen so agreeable a person, and longed to have her come again; but I do not recollect that she did, nor that I saw her again till I too was an adolescent.” This was her cousin, Lady Frances Scott, the dear intimate friend of her later years. When she was quite old, Lady Louisa could shut her eyes and see the whole scene—“where she sat, how she looked, how she spoke.” Such impressions were vivid in proportion to their rarity.

The little girl had indeed a friend in Lady Bute, as far as a child in so formal a household could reach her mother through ten brothers and sisters, not to speak of governesses and waiting-women. Lady Bute was a Wortley, with a pious dread of seeing the Montagu wits and foibles reappearing in any of her own daughters. She was an affectionate woman, with sound judgment, and though shy and rather forbidding in manner she could be excellent company with her intimates, having a quiet, observant woman’s gift of telling circumstantial stories. Of all her children little Louisa alone had any taste for her mother’s old tales and old friends.

When accounting to Sir Walter Scott for her intimate knowledge of things and people passed away before she was born, Lady Louisa explained, “I was so much the youngest of a numerous family that I had no play-fellow, and for that reason listened with all my ears to the grown people’s conversation, most especially when my mother and the friends of her youth got upon old stories.” The rest of the family yawned at the stories, and found in their mother’s friends—poor, witty Mrs Anne Pitt, deaf old Lady Suffolk, and Mrs Delany—only food for their dull quizzing.

May we not make it a gloss on the fifth command-



ment that they who live with the old in their youth and with the young in their age do indeed prolong their days in the land? By the tale of her years Lady Louisa lived from 1757 to 1851, but her memory stretched without a break from the Court of Queen Anne to the eve of the Great Exhibition!

But old age, with its serene activities, lay far off in the depths of a following century, when Lady Louisa walked, in 1781, a disconsolate, slender little figure, through the great galleries and frigid rooms of Luton. As we see her in the miniature by Mrs Mee, she wears the loose powdered hair with curls on the neck and the feathered hat which made an artist's labour light in those days. The face is small and fine, without being pretty; it is a shy, sensitive face, with a smile only waiting for response to shine out from lips and eyes.

Alas! there were few smiles and a sufficient cause for "the vapours" in the years when she was writing to Lady Caroline Dawson. "My mother," she writes once, "attributes my melancholy to fancying that *he* is neglecting me and fretting about it, and perhaps there is some truth in this."

*He* was William Medows, a cousin of Lady Bute's, a brother officer of one of the Stuart brothers. A younger son and a cousin—of course Lord Bute would not hear of such a thing. There was some fatal misunderstanding. Lady Louisa's efforts to conceal her feelings were only too successful; the lover adopted an air at once "cold and easy," and a year or two later married another. One winter stood out painfully in Lady Louisa's memory, in which Lady Caroline received many melancholy letters from her.

The cousins who should have been lovers met again at Tunbridge in 1792, Lady Louisa, a confirmed old maid of thirty-five, living with her mother; William Medows, a general in command of a large camp, the husband of an adored wife, the father of a charming

little daughter. Lady Louisa describes an afternoon spent in the camp. The good understanding between these cheerful married people, the General's solicitude to make his wife the centre of all attention, brought forcibly home to Lady Louisa the contrast of her own lonely lot. A thunderstorm broke over the camp, and in the tent a young officer began singing an affecting song. A deep dejection fell upon her spirits, though she hastens to add, "There was no envy nor malignity in my feelings; the lady is one of the sweetest and most engaging women I ever saw." Anne Elliot, in 'Persuasion,' claimed for her sex "the privilege—it is not a very enviable one—of loving longest when existence or when hope is gone." Lady Louisa was a wise and cheerful woman of fifty-six when the news of General Medows' death fell heavily on her heart, already saddened by the loss of her favourite sister, Caroline. "I did not attempt to read 'Rokeby,'" she writes to Sir Walter, "till a fortnight ago, my mind being thoroughly untuned to pleasure and needlework, my chief resource and occupation."

Year after year Lady Louisa did the round of London gaieties with little enjoyment. She set great store on good conversation, but was too shy to be a brilliant talker, except indeed behind a mask, when her shrewd wit and the gathered results of quiet observation gave her every advantage over her victim.

At one time she had apparently made a distinguished conquest in the person of Mr Henry Dundas, "the bonnie Dundas," the friend of Pitt and the favourite of Fortune, but also, unfortunately, the husband of a divorced wife and the father of five children. Lymphatic Lady Macartney was quite excited by the admiration Mr Dundas expressed for her sister; by-and-by, when the gentleman's attentions were discontinued, she remembered that his admiration had been expressed when he had just come from a great dinner, a time when any

woman would have been looked at with a favourable eye. Lady Louisa's vanity had been flattered by the great man's attentions, but she laughed whole-heartedly when the matter ended in nothing.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Lady Louisa was an old maid of forty-three, at a period and in a society where such a position implied a certain mortification. But the best of her life was still in store. In her later life she was to reap the harvest of her intellectual activity, her sound reading, her habit of quiet, sympathetic observation. How many women are able after fifty to enter into a new school of poetry and romance? To how many is it given to be the intimate friend, literary confidante, and trusted critic of the first genius of his time?

Once an independent old maid, Lady Louisa, there is no denying it, breathed more freely. Her house in Gloucester Place was full of books, French and English (besides her special collection of Spanish and Portuguese), of sketches and prints and objects of what was then called "virtù." She was happy in the devotion of a maid to whom she pays this fine tribute: "I have lived, when I could, with my superiors in intellect and character. God knows, I do it in my own house, in the person of my own humble maid; I feel every day that she has far better sense than I."

Lady Louisa's management of a household is too characteristic to be passed over in silence. When she was between eighty and ninety she writes, "I have never heard any complaints, and my *newest* servant, the housemaid, has lived with me twenty years. We all go to sleep together, as I daresay a good housewife would think; but I am too old to wake up."

Nature, to compensate for the lack of nearer ties, often bestows on single women the special grace of friendship. Lady Louisa's horror of exaggeration and sentiment prevented her forming any exclusive tie with another unat-

tached woman, such as that which moved her derision in the Ladies of Llangollen. Her friendships lay among her kinsfolk and certain companions of her youth. These were all married, and Lady Louisa included their husbands, and especially their daughters, in her friendship, thus unconsciously laying up provision for the years when she was to outlive even the friends of her later life. Her younger kinsmen—especially the Scottish ones—she regarded with a critical eye, regretting the dancing and fencing lessons that had formed the gallants of her youth, and the powder that had given distinction to red or scanty hair. “I am tired of ploughboys and postilions,” she adds in the character of “Aunt Tabitha,” her synonym for a maiden aunt.

Of all her friends the most intimate was her cousin, Lady Douglas,—the Lady Frances Scott of the black crape fan.

Every autumn saw Lady Louisa a guest at Bothwell Castle. Visits were really visits then, guests stayed for weeks, were, or became, intimate with fellow-guests, read aloud in the evening, contributed to the household book of poetry, enjoyed the conversation of “Girsy” at the Lodge and “Peggy MacGowan in the village,” and, in a word, shared the household life. Of the talk at the Bothwell breakfast-table Lady Louisa gives a lively account:—

“The murmured wisdom, heard by none,  
Of ‘Bothwell’s bonnie Jane’;<sup>1</sup>  
Too audible, alack! the pun  
My Lady strings amain.

Louisa’s lectures read on gloves  
And muslins for long hours;  
My Lord’s on good Scotch hay that loves  
To soak six weeks in showers.”

Old friends and kinsfolk made up the party for the

<sup>1</sup> Lord Douglas’s daughter by his first wife, afterwards Lady Montagu.

most part; occasionally a queer creature like little "Monk" Lewis strayed in amongst them. (At Lady Louisa's age she could "enjoy an odd animal without scruple.") After the chance meeting at the Lakes in 1800 Mr Morritt was often of the party, and read Elizabethan plays aloud in the evening. From what Lockhart says, we gather that Lady Louisa was at Bothwell when Scott paid his first visit there. What would one not give for any letter of hers describing the impression made by the tall young advocate, whose rather heavy-looking face would light up so wondrously as he crooned out his ballads or told his tales of Border chivalry! There were ghostly tales for the twilight in the hall, and the reciting of ballads, with the accompaniment of the murmuring Clyde, to the party sitting in the flecked sunshine of the lawn. Sometimes there was the excitement of an MS. poem:

"O, if with rugged minstrel lays  
 Unsated be thy ear,  
 And thou of deeds of other days  
 Another tale wilt hear,—

Then all beneath the spreading beech  
 Flung careless on the lea,  
 The Gothic Muse the tale shall teach  
 Of Bothwell's sisters three."

Could young poet have sought more flattering audience than those two quick-witted, sympathetic women, whose intercourse with the world had never dulled the fervour of imagination?

On one occasion Lady Louisa departed so far from her habitual reticence as to produce a humorous poem of her own on Scott's favourite story, "Muckle-mou'd Meg": afterwards she had a characteristic panic lest the verses should somehow get abroad in this way.

By 1807, when 'Marmion' was published, Lady Louisa was regularly corresponding with Walter Scott.



She was one of the party who at Buchanan (the Duke of Montrose's) heard Sir Walter read 'The Lady of the Lake.' Nothing escaped her quick perception. When Scott paused at the famous "dreaming" passage she was struck by "the thrill" in his voice when he spoke of "the renewal, in a dream, of feelings long hushed."

Lady Louisa was the only woman admitted in her own right to the secret of the authorship of the Waverley Novels—Mrs Skene, of course, shared her husband's knowledge. Of all Sir Walter's critics she was the soundest. Reading the letters in which she discusses each of the novels as it came out, a later age endorses all her judgments. "This applause is worth having," Sir Walter wrote on the back of one of her letters. Her previous training had fitted her to be a critic. She had, for one thing, belonged to no literary clique, and had committed herself to no critical oracles; she started quite unprejudiced. She had felt too genuinely to have any leaning towards sentimentality; her habit of quiet, humorous observation had given her knowledge of manners and insight into motive. Her early reading had been in English history from the original sources, so that she brought expert knowledge to her judgment of many of the novels. Her wide reading in the best literature had made her sensitive to style. She swoops like a bird of prey on the word "sentimental," which Sir Walter by an anachronism had put into the mouth of Claverhouse. Above all, her memory could endorse or supplement many things in the novels. Apropos of 'Redgauntlet,' she gives a racy description of Catherine Walkinshaw, sister to Charles Edward's mistress, and the Princess Dowager's bed-chamber woman,—

"In my younger days the most eminent managing gossip in London, always busy about somebody's affairs, the adviser of every Scottish family, the protectress of every raw young Scots-

man, the confidante and assistant of all match-making mammas, Scotch or English. I have the portly figure before me with her long lace ruffles, her gold snuff-box, and her double chin. . . . Surely there are varieties of the human species that die away and are lost, like golden pippins and clove gilly-flowers. The Catherine Walkinshaw class seems extinct."

When the 'Heart of Mid-Lothian' appeared, Lady Louisa felt almost as if she were reading a page of her own early life.

"My old family prejudices were secretly gratified by the light in which you place Uncle John of Argyle. . . . You have drawn him to the very life. I heard so much of him in my youth, that I really believe I am as good a judge as if I had seen and lived with him."

She herself wrote a short Memoir of this great uncle, one of the most vivid historical portraitures in the language. Had she only consented to turn her powers to such a purpose, Lady Louisa might have been the best memoir-writer in English. Here is a little picture of the gambling Miss Pelham that might, for its grimness, hang in Bunyan's 'Vanity Fair,' for its touch of pathos in Thackeray's:—

"Miss Pelham was an original character; a contemporary of hers, who did not love her, applied to her those lines of Pope—

'Strange flights and stranger graces still she had :  
Was just not ugly and was just not mad.'

So an enemy might say. Yet there was something wonderfully attractive, even when I knew her as an elderly woman. She had dressed better than anybody, been better bred,—more the fashion. . . . But poor Miss P.'s misfortune was that, with good and noble qualities and the power of being extremely agreeable, she had strong passions, a warm temper, and no self-control. . . . As she grew older all passions merged in that of gambling, carried to a height equal to what it ever was in any man. She ruined herself, and would have ruined her sister if the mild and excellent Miss Mary's friends had

not risen in a body and almost forced the latter to leave the house where they lived together, and withdraw to one of her own, which the other never forgave. Poor, poor Miss Pelham, she was a person one could not help pitying with all her faults. I have seen her at that villainous faro-table, putting the guineas she had perhaps borrowed on a card with the tears running down her face—the wreck of what had been high-minded and generous.”

How lifelike, how tremulous, how young, and how awkward are these little pictures of George III. and the beautiful Lady Sarah!—

“My mother, who *knew* with certainty whatever was then passing, has often assured me that no thought of marrying her ever once entered into his head, but in love with her he assuredly was, and if she had played her cards well there is no saying what influence she might have gained over him. Too young to be ambitious, she did not play them at all. On one memorable day he accosted her with great empressement at the Drawing-Room; she turned away, scarcely giving him an answer. He then recollected that he was a king, turned on his heel, and left her in manifest displeasure. . . . [Lady Louisa here quotes from Lord Holland’s Memoir.] ‘Now to tell what had put the young lady out of humour. There was a very foolish idle boy, Lord Newbottle.’ . . . In short, Lady Sarah had had a quarrel with the lover she liked, cried all night, and avenged his offences upon the king, to her brother-in-law’s (Lord Holland’s) extreme vexation. . . .

“Another scene passed in public which I have often heard Lady Macartney describe. At the Court-ball on His Majesty’s first birthday (June 4th, 1761) Lady Sarah’s place was of course at the head of the dancers’ bench nearest his seat. Lo! the royal chair, heavy as it was, moved by degrees more and more to the left, and he who sat thereon edged and edged farther the same way, and the conversation went on till all dancing was over and every one sat in suspense, and it approached one in the morning ere he recollected himself and rose to dismiss the assembly.”

No one who can write like this can fail to find pleasure in her pen, and all through her long life Lady Louisa scribbled, scribbled and burnt! The poetry written in

her youth had nearly all been destroyed in that black winter when the romance of her life had ended. Her later verses were didactic or narrative, and far inferior to her prose. She had an eighteenth-century gentlewoman's horror of appearing in print. It was only at the instance of a nephew and to please her kinsman, Lord Wharncliffe, that she consented to allow her lively anecdotes prefatory to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Letters to be published,—anecdotes so vividly realised that they read like personal recollections. It was a tribute to her powers of writing and her historical knowledge that she was Sir Walter's collaborator in a series of 'Letters of the Time of James I.,'<sup>1</sup> with which at one time he had thought of hoaxing the public. Referring to this abortive scheme, Sir Walter speaks of "Lady Louisa putting in her oar, and admirably she handled it." It is doubtful if Lady Louisa had ever contemplated her work being published.

Her thwarted instinct for literary expression probably accounts for the touch of spleen which she is apt to discover in writing of blue-stockings and authoresses. Mary Berry invading Bothwell Castle as an intimate bored the privileged kinswoman; Mary Berry patronising her betters in society offended the patrician; Mary Berry slighting 'The Spectator' provoked the woman of taste.

In expressing her irritated contempt for the high-flown language of the authoress of 'Corinne,' Lady Louisa gratefully adopts a colloquialism from a masculine correspondent—though at other times she apologises for such mild phrases as "quiz" or "bore." "Madame de Staël," she writes, "defied any one to express 'le sentiment' in English. We may have no word corresponding, but we have a phrase '*All my eye and Betty Martin,*' was the answer."

<sup>1</sup> These were never published, but supplied some of the material for the 'Fortunes of Nigel.'

Lady Louisa, like the rest of her generation, admired Miss Edgeworth's writings, and found her personally "a very pleasant conversable woman, with Irish freedom of manner." But she repeats a foolish story of some little social solecism, and adds this comment—"This from Miss Edgeworth, as good a gentlewoman as any of us had she not drowned her gentility in her inkpot!"

Such feline touches are so rare in Lady Louisa's letters that one can only enjoy the little note of wickedness when she writes to Sophia Lockhart of Scott's "good bustling friend Mrs Hughes]" as "Mother Hughes," and alluded to her habit of going "*à la chasse des lions*"!

Of all the letters addressed to Scott, Lady Louisa's are the most nearly on a level with his own. The fundamental understanding between them instructed her wit what to say and what to leave unsaid at the time of Scott's financial disaster. There was something of a man in Lady Louisa—respect for her friend controlled her impulse of sympathy. The warmth and frankness of Scott's reply were the reward of her restraint. It is to her he wrote this beautiful sentence summing up the wealth remaining to him. "I have everything else—my walks, my plantations, my dogs great and small, my favourite squire, my Highland pony, my plans, my hopes, *my quiet thoughts*." Another sentence in the same letter must have touched the heart of his correspondent: "God bless you, my dear Lady Louisa; you have been since I knew you the ready and active comforter of much distress."

A strong bond of union between these old friends in the last years of Scott's life was Lady Louisa's affection for Sophia Lockhart when she came to London. The first time Scott stayed with his daughter in November 1826 Lady Louisa dined to meet him. She could still love the sight of love, this brave and gifted woman whose own heart was never too old to lose the ache of loneliness. "I do like people who can love with all



their hearts. His daughter Sophia sat gazing at him with such pleasure, and said so often, 'Now, don't you think my father is remarkably well?' so she is quite content." Lady Louisa took her friends "for better for worse"; their fame lay very near her heart.

'St Ronan's Well' made her anxious. "I apprehend a tumble downstairs," she wrote, "and shall be as sorry as if I had written the rest myself." She read the doom of 'Count Robert of Paris,' three months before it was published, "in Mrs Lockhart's face, and heard it in Mr Lockhart's short words." "Alas! alas!" she wrote, "I have got 'Count Robert,' and could cry over it."

When the news of Sir Walter's death reached her, she was mourning the last of her early friends, Lady Emily MacLeod. She had expected to feel it a relief to know that Sir Walter's sufferings were over. "But yet, but yet," she writes, "one cannot bear to think that it is all over and he quite gone."

To Morritt she writes: "Now he is gone it seems as if one had not valued him enough nor been proud enough of knowing him. I shall always thank you for having prompted me to go up and meet him last year, and so catch the last faint rays of the setting sun."

Scott died in 1832; Lady Louisa (who had always claimed to belong to an earlier generation than he) died in 1851, living on into a new world, and looking back to old days at Bothwell till they must have seemed as remote as the dear sorrows and loves of her youth. But no mist dimmed her retrospect nor softened her regret. She must have been about eighty when she used these pathetic words in a letter to Lady Montagu: "I can understand the gulp it takes to give up all prospects and memories at once—but so it betides us all to do in one shape or another in our human life. As the Scottish peer said in signing the Union, 'And so there is an end to an auld sang,' I have seen the end of most of my auld sangs."

She never saw Bothwell again after Lady Douglas's death in 1817; she heard of it as being surrounded "by the villainous, smoking temples of Mammon," but adds, "but the Clyde still runs by." She sent Lady Montagu as a precious gift the beautifully bound MS. book containing the Bothwell poetry, "the collected nonsense of the year 1800." She had tried to read it, but it only awakened pain. "*It will not do yet*, and there is not time before me as before you, nor have I young things as you have who will take delight in hearing of what passed in your youth."

Lady Louisa read to the end that noblest of "auld sangs," the record of Sir Walter's life. Sophia Lockhart kept her informed of the progress of the 'Life' in the days when Lockhart shut himself up in an upper room to work undisturbed: when the first four volumes appeared Lady Louisa collected kind criticisms of old friends, to be repeated to Sophia on her death-bed. They "made her eyes brighten," and were the only things that roused her from the languor of death. When the blow fell, darkening for ever Lockhart's heart and hearth, Lady Louisa wrote anxiously to Mr Morritt concerning him and his children. She had with silent, indignant sorrow to hear it questioned "whether his wife's death was any affliction to him," so far had Lockhart's manner misled the rash and shallow judgment of society.

The words she wrote in 1837, when she read the fifth volume of the 'Life,' are too poignant and characteristic to allow of shortening:—

"I have not read much of it, though I opened it eagerly. The description of a very gay scene at Abbotsford, when they were all going out to hunt and fish, and the pig would go too, brought him and them so directly before my eyes that it surprised me into a fit of crying, and I shut the book, to be resumed at leisure. Yet perhaps this very passage may be criticised by strangers and enemies—for enemies there are—as trifling and tedious."

A little later she had finished the fifth volume, and writes again:—

“I have now got through my fifth volume of Lockhart, and come once more to the odious money matters, which always make me writhe. Till then it seems to me admirable, and the short but thrilling passage in which he mentions his own misfortunes,<sup>1</sup> breaking off in order to resume his history, goes more to one’s heart than twenty pages of lamentations.”

It is pleasant to find Lady Louisa recording later a visit from “the little Lockhart”—Sophia’s only daughter. “She is growing very pretty and tall enough for her age, her face and her features small, her countenance like her mother’s.” Lady Louisa lived to hear with pleasure that the Duke of Buccleuch had lent one of his houses for the Lockhart-Hope honeymoon. In all the houses of her friends and kindred it was now the third and fourth generation that claimed her attention. She could remind Lady Montagu of the day when she, a baby of four, had roared at the old Duke of Montagu, and now it was Lady Montagu’s grandchildren “whose merry faces it did me good to see.” For children she had the wistful respect of a single woman, an attitude far less trying to baby shyness than the confident advances of mothers. “Little Miss Mouse” must not come down to the carriage to see her wonderful old kinswoman for fear of cold. When the late Lord Bute, “Butino, the (pin’s-) head of our house,” is brought to see her, she writes of his sturdy limbs to Lady Montagu, a little deprecatingly, as if a great-grand-aunt was no authority on such a subject.

Keeping her judgment clear and her mind alert, Lady Louisa had the almost unique experience of hearing the judgment of posterity on her contemporaries and of

<sup>1</sup> The allusion to Mrs Lockhart’s death is on page 125 of the fifth volume of the original edition.

seeing the events of her early life in the perspective of history. The last decade of her life (1841-51) was rich in published memoirs. She read Campbell's 'Lives of the Chancellors,' and wished that she might put the author right on various points; she read Horace Walpole's 'Memoirs of the Court of George III.,' and agreed with Lady Charlotte Lindsay (Lord North's daughter) to sit still and hear their respective fathers abused; she read Sir Robert Keith's 'Memoirs,' and recalled meeting Miss Anne Keith at Lady Douglas's house in Bruton Street and her clever talk and letters; she read Madame d'Arblay's 'Letters,' and recalled the fact that the little novelist was as unskilled in lacing Queen Charlotte's stays and tying her petticoat as any lady of quality. On reading Lord Hervey's 'Memoirs,' she makes this spirited comment on the charge of indelicacy brought by some one on the book: "Indelicate, forsooth! I have not found it so,—nothing has shocked me of that sort. Wickedness for wickedness, I should be less disturbed by all Charles the Second's intrigues, or even Louis Quinze's, than by the fiendlike hatred raging in the house of Brunswick, not only between father and son, but between mother and son."

Talking of her love of old stories, Lady Louisa once wrote to Sir Walter Scott: "Now that I am an ancient Tabby myself, I should be a treasure of anecdote to anybody who had the same humour, but I meet with few who have." In her extreme old age she was an authority on all bygone matters, from the hang of a hoop to the character of a king. "And people come to me for information up to Noah's flood," she writes with all the old humour.





VI.

‘MARMION’ GROUP

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WILLIAM STEWART ROSE

GEORGE ELLIS AND RICHARD HEBER

SIR WILLIAM FORBES

JAMES SKENE AND COLIN MACKENZIE



## WILLIAM STEWART ROSE.

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WHEN Surtees and his friend Raine visited Scott in 1819, Scott said to Raine: "England made me what I am. The Scots thought little of 'The Lay,' but England spoke out, and the Scots were ashamed of themselves." Scottish, Irish, and Welsh, we have all in turn had reason to be grateful to the large good-nature which prompts the predominant partner to receive with enthusiasm the poetic utterances, to take for granted the romantic temperament, of the three allied peoples who share with her the name of British.

Enlightened Scottish opinion in 1805 took the note from Jeffrey, and Jeffrey had written with the clearness which makes his worst errors of judgment so fatally easy to remember: "We can scarcely help regretting that the feuds of Border chieftains should have monopolised as much poetry as might have served to immortalise the whole baronage of the empire"—as if there were any question of versifying Debrett! Or more succinctly: "Mr Scott must either sacrifice his Border prejudices or offend all his readers in other parts of the empire." But "readers in other parts of the empire" probably wrote down Mr Jeffrey's criticism as "provincial," while "Mr Scott's Border prejudices" opened to him the heart of the whole world. The warmth with which the poem was received in

the South, and the momentary hesitation of his own countrymen, partly account for the fact that out of the six dedicatory epistles of 'Marmion,' four are dedicated to Englishmen, namely, William Stewart Rose, John Marriott, George Ellis, and Richard Heber. The first epistle, containing the noble elegy on Pitt, was fittingly dedicated to William Rose. His father, George Rose, was the last of his friends—except his relations and doctors—to see Pitt on his death-bed. He had the task of relating the last days and reporting the dying words of the great Minister to the House of Commons. Through his whole political career—a steady, industrious career, distinguished only by a Scottish instinct for finance—George Rose had simply followed the lead of Pitt, except where the Minister's bolder genius had pointed to Reform and Abolition. The rise of English families at the end of the eighteenth century may be fairly typified in two generations of the Roses. The father, the son of a non-juring minister in Aberdeenshire, had gone to sea, then obtained Government employment and rose to be Pitt's right-hand man. As he went on his way he secured posts and sinecures, and, unlike his patron, accumulated wealth so successfully that he not only contributed to pay Pitt's debts, but lived in such state on his property in Hampshire that he there entertained the king. His sons went to Eton; and in 1796 his second son William, then twenty-one, was returned member for Christchurch; and when, four years later, he retired from Parliament his father secured him two lucrative clerkships.

Having neglected the duties belonging to these posts for twenty-four years, William Rose retired in 1825 from active life with a modest pension of a thousand a-year. The feathering of the Rose family nest did not escape the thumping eloquence of Cobbett:—

"George Rose, . . . a sinecure placeman to the tune

of three thousand pounds a-year, with another sinecure place for his son William, to the tune of two thousand pounds a-year or thereabouts; which sinecures his sons George and William still [1832] have, while the weavers of Paisley are covered with rags and are half-starved."

This, however, was the Radical point of view. To William Rose and to his friends the arrangement was as natural as the transmission of a private fortune from father to son.

William Rose had cause to bless the corrupt age he lived in, for with all his wit and tastes and learning he was more fitted to enjoy a competence than to earn it. He was a humorist (in the old sense of the world), an eccentric, a sportsman, an invalid, a connoisseur, and an *ennuyé*. He had an easy, if rather loose, accomplishment of verse, and what we know of his tastes and individuality is chiefly drawn from poetical epistles addressed to his friends. Like Horace Walpole, Rose devoted much time and taste to devising and decorating his quite original home, Gundimore. On the shore among sandhills overlooking the Solent he had found a sort of summer-house, the "Folly" of some previous eccentric, bought the land and laid it out in the formal, terraced fashion that Sir Uvedale Price was championing against the prevalent Return-to-Nature plan of gardening.

Scott himself, both in his essay on Landscape-Gardening and in the introduction to 'Quentin Durward,' avows himself a friend to a certain stateliness and artificiality in the laying out of grounds around a house. The first principle he laid down for the plan of Abbotsford was that "the house shall be in the garden," not isolated in "a waste of gravel and lawn."

At Gundimore a high sand-bank sheltered the house from the sea. On the outside of this a balustraded terrace



looked out across the Solent to the Isle of Wight; on the inner side of the bank a screen of tamarisks and ilexes sheltered the garden, but a low iron-work gate afforded a glimpse of the sea and the far horizon. It was a principle of Italian gardening to let in a window, as it were, into an enclosed garden, and Rose, shivering under English east winds and resenting the greyness of his native skies, had tried as much as might be to introduce a little bit of Italy into Hampshire. But wild winds sweeping up the Channel would not play into the delusion. His myrtles would not flourish with all his care, and Ugo Foscolo, his friend, hit off the character of the place when he called its master "Rose, l'amico della magion' ventosa." But in the garden, altars brought from Asia Minor, cinerary urns from Rome, ancient pilasters hiding water-pipes, and the mask of Seneca spouting water into a carven basin, might almost have persuaded even the valetudinarian master of the house that the sea that sparkled in the occasional sun was the Mediterranean, and not the Atlantic. In the long one-storied house a long gallery served as library. One room was furnished with Greek works of art; in another, fitted up with Persian decorations, James Morier (author of 'Hadji Baba'), dressed in his Persian garb, had been introduced to the neighbouring Hampshire squires as a genuine Oriental.

To this fascinating home William Rose welcomed much good company. Here came Hookham Frere, translator of Aristophanes—

"The strenuous idler in Athenian masque  
Has in my sand and sunshine loved to bask."

Here, too, came Frere's collaborator, both on the 'Microcosm' at Eton and on the 'Anti-Jacobin,' George Canning—

"Whom heavy spirits censure as unfit  
For rule, because a scholar and a wit."

Another guest, less nimble of wit, was also valued and welcomed:—

“Here oftentimes hath the historic page  
Been turned by honest Hallam, shrewd and sage.”

Opinions of all shades were discussed at Gundimore:—

“Here I, from Horner’s lips, mild wisdom’s type,  
Have gathered racy fruit, yet early ripe,  
Which, but too like its symbol of the wall,  
Sneaped by untimely frost was doomed to fall.”

The most interesting guest—save one—was Coleridge, walking out from Muddiford, where he was the guest of his friends the Gilmores:—

“On these ribbed sands was Coleridge pleased to pace,  
While ebbing seas have hummed a rolling base  
To his rapt talk. . . .”

A poem to be entitled “Gundimore” was one of Coleridge’s many unfulfilled schemes: only a tiny fragment of it is preserved. “A long wave came in and broke at his feet while we were walking on the sand,” writes Rose. “‘That wave,’ said he, ‘seems to me like a world’s embrace, and I will bring it into Gundimore.’”

Hither, too, in 1807, came Walter Scott in the first flush of his fame:—

“Here Walter Scott has woo’d the northern Muse;  
Here has with me rejoiced to walk and cruise.”

William Rose’s Muse, gentle and observant as she is, does not go directly; she skirts round her subject, divagating as she goes. She lived long enough to recall with some garrulity the days when Rose as host showed off his historic country to the most responsive of sight-seers. In the New Forest Scott had not, as at Rokeby, to invent local tradition. The glade was shown where

Rufus fell "pierced by the partner of his woodland craft," and Scott, who was persuaded that what he did other men could do also, worked on Rose to tell the tale in metre borrowed from the 'Lay.' There was a noonday rest in the ruins of Netley Abbey. (There is no need to cite Rose's verse for a scene which for all time belongs to Gray and prose.) There was a climb to the Celtic camp and barrow on the higher slope that looks to the sea. On another day they visited Corfe Castle; then, taking a farther flight, saw with exultation the arsenal works at Portsmouth in full blast. The nights, in Greek room or Persian room, were worthy of the days, and years afterwards were recalled with the same regret:—

"The flask no more, dear Walter, shall I quaff  
With thee, no more enjoy thy hearty laugh!"

With Rose, as with Heber and with Ellis, Scott's first introduction had been a common love of old romances. Rose had already brought out his translation of a late French version of 'Amadis of Gaul.' That generation had too little faith in prose. George Ellis, indeed, told his Metrical Romances in prim eighteenth-century English, but with the dash of humour that is of all centuries.

Rose translated 'Amadis' before the rich music of the romantic years had quickened the imagination of England. For his translation he used the poetic form current in his youth, and curiously flattened out the original. "I have," he admits, "attempted to introduce some of those trifling ornaments which even the simplest poetry imperiously demands." The most sophisticated poetry hardly demands adjectives that merely disqualify their nouns, such as: "peerless charms," "sylvan prey," "foaming steed," "glittering falchion."

"The Red King," another poem on "Corfe Castle,"

and a third on the "Pilgrimage of St Louis," only prove that Rose was trespassing on another man's field. A year or two later he found the style really suited to his leisurely muse and deliberate humour in the *sesta* and *ottava rima* of the Italians.

Of all European literatures the Italian has had the most varied and constant influence on our literature. With Dante's influence on Chaucer it began, with Rossetti and Ruskin Dante's reign has come round again, but, between, some half-dozen other Italian poets have had as direct an influence.

When Scott good-humouredly consented, at Rose's request, to subscribe for some edition of Dante, he made it a condition that he was not to be expected to read it. Talking of Dante to Mr Cheney at Rome, he characteristically complained that Dante had thought no one worth sending to Hell but his own Italians, whereas other people's ancestors had just as good a right to be there. He was immensely pleased when Mr Cheney pointed out that *he* had no reason to complain, as his ancestor, Michael Scott, had been consigned to the nethermost pit. Ariosto he had discovered for himself as a boy, and studied him and loved him. When Dugald Stewart gave out an essay on Homer, Scott, knowing no Greek, wrote an essay in praise of Ariosto with a disparaging comparison of Homer; Dugald Stewart condemned the essay as off the point, but was frankly amazed at Scott's knowledge of the Italian poem. Probably Mr Francis Osbaldistone's translation of Ariosto was an abandoned enterprise of Walter Scott's. Italian was a favourite study of educated English people in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The poets admired were, among others, the authors of the humorous epic, Berni, Pulci, Ariosto in his sportive mood, and the contemporary satirist Casti. Frere imitated Berni in "Whistlecraft," Rose freely paraphrased Casti in "The Parliament of Beasts."

In the *ottava rima* the strain of finding two sets of three rhymes, followed by the sudden ease of the rhyming couplet, invite inevitably to the mock-heroic. Frere had made it a vehicle for his admirable fantastic nonsense before Byron took possession of it for his stinging wit and fertile inventions.

Rose, however, used the *sesta rima*, a poorer measure suited to his slacker muse. Ugo Foscolo, his reviewer in the 'Quarterly,' detested the character of Casti for this especially, that "he laughed at all faith, all patriotism, and all morality." He says that Rose greatly improved on his original by condensing it into one-third of its length, and in especial by what he left out:—

"I have let go . . . my author's skirt  
Whenever he has plunged through filth and dirt."

The cantos of this translation are introduced by epistles to the author's friends, Foscolo, Frere, and Scott. The valetudinarian habit of discussing his health had grown on Rose, and the metre he had chosen does not put such trifling to shame. Still one line ends in the word "Ashestiel," and something of the genial freshness of the life there colours the verse:—

"But then I thought it argued small discretion  
To go in my weak state to Ashestiel,  
When for such scheme one needs the full possession  
Of heart and health and strength and nerves of steel.  
Troth I would rather face a shrapnel mortar  
Than drink and shoot the moors and 'burn the water.'"

In the Abbotsford years Rose seems to have been looked for every autumn. A room on the ground-floor was inviolately his. When he failed to appear Scott wrote that his absence would sadden the autumn both at Abbotsford and Chiefswood.

Valetudinarian though he was, he shot and fished;



"the most fastidious man of letters," as Lockhart calls him, he insisted on being driven up Yarrow to make acquaintance with the "Boar of Ettrick"; an *ennuyé* in his constant pose, his jokes kept the Scott household in laughter from one autumn to the next. "Lady Scott and Anne send their kindest loves," writes Scott in 1821, "and so do the brace of Lockharts. Your name and jokes are familiar in their mouths as household words, and among the charms of July we always reckon on the pleasure of your company." We are content with the echo of this old laughter. Instead of regretting Rose's jokes we can enjoy his wise dictum,—"It is with wit as with wine (at least this is true of the most delicate species of both), neither will bear carriage, and both must be swallowed before they have time to evaporate. There is a *mousseux* wit as well as a *mousseux* wine." Part of the amusement that Rose brought with him lay in his valet Hinves, known among Rose's friends as *the Clown*, *the Gander*, *Caliban*. Hinves was a "fool" in the Shakespearean sense, with all a "fool's" fidelity, for he served his master for forty years. Originally he had been a book-binder and a preacher among the Methodists. Rose came across him first preaching under a tree in the New Forest. "The sermon," writes Lockhart, "contained such touches of good feeling and broad humour that Rose promoted the preacher to be his valet on the spot." A curious promotion for a preacher of the eternal Gospel!

When 'Waverley' appeared, Morritt at once discovered traits in the half-witted servant, Davie Gellatley, drawn from Hinves' eccentricities. Morritt probably alludes to Davie's habit of answering questions and referring to events by snatches of rhyme. Hinves was indignant when he discovered in the "Doom of Devorgoil" certain lines of his own, invoking evil spirits, introduced "*without any acknowledgment.*"



neither work of art was to be described nor æsthetic disquisition tolerated. We have had since then so many impressions of Venice, where painters in colour or in words have exhausted all they had of knowledge, imagination, emotion, intellectual subtlety, and sensuous delight to catch some fresh aspect of the radiant place, that it is rather composing to find people a century ago valuing Venice simply as a spot

“Where the wind woos you lovingly, and where  
Wit walks the street and music’s in the air.”

It was the place where worn-out or socially outlawed Europe came and remained and enjoyed itself; an easy society, where restaurants were open from mid-day till the small hours, and hostesses received up till three in the morning; where the whole life revolved round the theatre.

The chief interest and attraction in Rose’s book lies in the sincere and troubled concern of this valetudinarian sinecurist and dilettante for the condition of the peasantry of North Italy. The stupid tyranny of the Austrian authorities, the irritating taxes and restrictions, kept him in a fume; the poverty and the malaria in the villages were never off his mind. “The poverty of this people is a spectre which breaks in upon you in the solitude of the fields; it crosses and blasts you amidst the crowds of gaiety and dissipation.” He is also alive to the natural grace of the people; of the peasant encouraging the oxen who are carrying home a load of hay—“*Povereti, povereti, vu lavore per vu stessi*”; of the young Venetian laden with a burden, “who if he ask an old man to make way for him addresses him as father.”

The book shows everywhere “the wit and talent” that Sir Walter praises in his friend, but only one passage convinces us of that “frolic beyond the bounds of sobriety” that was the delight of Chiefswood and Abbotsford. It is a story of a Venetian “who made a provision

of torches for his own funeral, artificially loaded with crackers, anticipating to a confidential friend the hub-bub that would result from the explosion which, he had calculated, must take place at the most inconvenient spots. . . . It would be an unpardonable omission if I were not to state that this posthumous joke verified the most sanguine expectations of the projector."

Somewhere on the shelves of country houses or amid the dust of old book-shops a little volume of humorous anecdotes might perhaps be found with the happy title, 'A Wilderness of Monkeys,' by William Stewart Rose. Sir Walter declared that Rose had purloined so many of his stories that he felt cut off from part of his conversational stock-in-trade.

For eight years after his return to England Rose worked at his translation of Ariosto. The work was at once a drag and the main interest of a life bounded ever more and more narrowly by physicians and dietetics. When it was complete Rose compared himself to an invalid who could not eat his dinner, yet felt a blank when it was removed. Scott met his friend for the last time in 1828, when he went down to Brighton to see Sophia Lockhart. Rose dined one night, but the company was hardly very merry. Scott was preoccupied by anxiety for little Johnnie Lockhart—"a thing to break one's heart by looking at,"—and Rose was concerned about his regimen.

A good deal of enjoyment is, however, compatible with the hypochondriac habit. A charming poetic epistle to Frere—also taking care of his health in the hot sunshine of Malta—picks out the pleasant things in Rose's life at Brighton:—

"Upon this tumbled bed of thyme and turf  
I lounge and listen to the rumbling surf;  
Or idly mark the shadows as they fly,  
While green earth maps the changes of the sky.

. . . . .

Here, gladdened by pure air and savour sweet  
 Of wild herbs crushed beneath my pony's feet,  
 I rove, when, warmed by softer air and shower,  
 They show their creeping blue or crimson flower."

The clear far view, the freshness of the downs, make up a simpler beauty than the quaint exotic charm of Gundimore, and instead of a succession of friends, ministers, poets, ambassadors, Rose is now well content with one friend, Charles Townshend, the parson of a small parish near.

"Here oft descending through a double swell,  
 I dive into a little wooded dell  
 Embosoming a hamlet, church, and yard.  
 . . . . .  
 O'ergrown with greenwood is the curate's rest,  
 So screened it might be called the parson's nest."

England has no product more characteristic and more admirable than the holy and humble men of heart who, scattered up and down the land and scattered up and down the centuries, have served and serve her altars. Chaucer knew such a parson, Isaac Walton knew several; Goldsmith has drawn one for us and Fielding another, the latter with foibles of his own! Meekness crossed with courage, humility graced with fine breeding, learning made lovable by quaintness, holiness compatible with geniality, have, in varying quantities, been the characteristics of them all, with probably a flavour of antiquarianism or literature or natural history superadded.

"Keen in the cause of altar and of throne,  
 My peerless parson, careless in his own,  
 Says in his heart (what poets only sing)  
 'That a glad poverty's an honest thing.'"

With the parson and his dog Rose could still hobble over the downs; with the parson over a dish of *risotto* discourse of vintages, though he confesses that seldom



could either drain the wine-cup dry; and when the parson's discourse mounted to higher themes, Rose could, pleased, sit listening by—

“And when my friend's in his Platonic lures,  
Although I lose his words, I like his tunes.”

Rose's life was to end sadly enough in decay of powers physical and mental. But these days with Charles Townshend were at least a pleasant pause when he could say of himself—

“So I to my own music limp through life.”

## GEORGE ELLIS.

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FROM the meagre materials gleaned out of other men's biographies concerning George Ellis, the impression is clear that he was a singularly delightful and sympathetic man. The very briefness of the references goes to establish this. No one describes George Ellis, no one ever seems to meet him for the first time; he is everywhere taken for granted, a necessary intimate in every society that he frequented—and one may add that everywhere it is the best society, the wittiest, the most urbane, the most conversant with affairs.

In the society of the eighteenth century—slower than the nineteenth to open its arms to mere wealth—the *novi homines* were represented by East Indian nabobs and West Indian planters. The Eastern man of wealth purchased political place and influence, the Western devoted himself to fashion and pleasure.

The Ellises were a good West Indian family. Of George's youth and education we know nothing; one surmises that—like the sixteenth and seventeenth century poets whose biographies he touches in so happily in 'Specimens of English Poetry'—"he was entered at Christ's Church College, Oxford, and there made sufficient progress in classical learning." But in truth it is as an accepted wit and beau at Bath that we make his acquaintance in the 'Seventies.

A happy turn for versifying was part of the equip-

ment of an eighteenth-century fine gentleman. The vogue of Ansty's 'New Bath Guide' had made Bath a school of trifling *vers de société*. A certain Lady Millar, who established a claim on society by affecting wit and preciosity, had a classical urn in her drawing-room into which visitors were expected to drop verses, occasional, complimentary, facetious, or sentimental. Miss Burney has an entertaining page describing the blue-stockings and *beaux esprits* who crowded round the Bath Easton Vase. Miss Anna Seward, the Swan of Lichfield, speaks much more kindly of this "amiable and elegant institution, the Bath Easton Vase," but then she was herself one of the myrtle-crowned. Among these George Ellis was prominent. A very clever man, if young enough, may find it agreeable to shine in a very silly society. Facetious verses, written by a man of twenty-four to divert Bath society in the mid-eighteenth century, would have failed in their immediate object if we, in our time, found them tolerable. Ellis's contemporaries laughed at his little volumes of Tales, and men of sense like Sir Gilbert Elliot declared that he had never read "anything so light, so clever, and so lively."

Dean Milman, writing to Lady Minto in 1869, says: "It is not generally known that George Ellis originated both the very cleverest collections of political wit of different sides, Whig and Tory, the 'Rolliad' and the 'Anti-Jacobin.'" One would have been grateful to the Dean if he had given the authority for what one would so gladly believe. Be that as it may, we find, in 1784, Ellis an acknowledged wit and the companion of the brilliant young men who gathered round Burke and Fox and buzzed like a swarm of hornets round Pitt, the immaculate young Prime Minister. It is worth while studying the political history of the period,—Fox's India Bill, the Fall of the Coalition Ministry, the Westminster Scrutiny, the

first Ministry of Pitt,—merely to enjoy fully the humour of the ‘*Rolliad*,’ a humour elaborate, personal, mischievous; coarse by our standards, but by all standards full of spirit and fun.

The form of the ‘*Rolliad*’ is excellently contrived to avoid tediousness. An epic is imagined closely following the structure of the *Æneid*, with the ancestor of a certain Mr Rolle, member for Devonshire, for hero; and solemn criticisms of this poem and copious extracts were the work of various hands working with perfect freedom and independence. One qualification all contributors shared: these wits, men of the world and politicians, were as familiar with Virgil as we are with nothing but the multiplication-table. There must have gone infinite mirth to the making of the ‘*Rolliad*,’—ideas flying from brain to brain, eager talking, bursts of explosive laughter. The meetings probably took place at Brooks’s Club. Sheridan would flash in making suggestions, though no actual lines have been attributed to him; Laurence, Burke’s devoted echo, was the leading spirit, unwieldy in person, awkward in society, full of witty inventions; Fitzpatrick, Fox’s *fidus Achates*, was another, arbiter of waistcoats, mainstay of private theatricals, but a gallant officer and a Whig, staunch even in Anti-Jacobin days; Tickell, Sheridan’s brother-in-law, was a fourth, famous for political squibs; a fifth was General Burgoyne, most ill-fated of commanding officers, but credited by his contemporaries with the only comedy that really reproduced genteel society; yet another was Richard Burke, of whom Goldsmith writes—

“In short, so provoking a devil was Dick,  
That we wished him full ten times a-day at Old Nick;  
But missing his mirth and agreeable vein,  
As often we wished to have Dick back again.”

Lastly, there was our Mr Ellis, with his hatchet-face

and "sapient prominence of nose," a manner perfect in its urbanity, and a humour delicate and lambent in social intercourse but pointed and personal in satiric verse.

The lines on Pitt—

"Pert without fire, without experience sage,  
Young with more art than Shelburne gleaned from age.  
Too proud from pilfered greatness to descend :  
Too humble not to call Dundas a friend," &c.—

are certainly by Ellis. These were winged words that were destined to fly home rather awkwardly.

The year after the appearance of the 'Rolliad,' the irrepressible Whig wits found a new field for their fooling. The laureateship was vacant, and at once, under the auspices of Brooks's, Tory statesmen, scholars, peers, poets, and Mrs Hannah More, all rushed into the field with "Probationary Odes."

In days when the King was fighting for Prerogative he was exposed to personal attacks that would scandalise constitutional times. Here is George Ellis's portrait of George III. :—

"Mighty sovereign, mighty master,  
George is content with lath and plaster.  
At his own palace gate,  
In a poor porter's lodge by Chambers planned,  
See him with Jenky hand-in-hand  
Talking, talking, talking, talking,  
Talking of affairs of State,  
All for his country's good.  
Oh, Europe's pride, Britannia's hope,  
To view his turnips and potatoes,  
Down his fair kitchen-garden's slope  
The monarch stalks like Cincinnatus."

The 'Rolliad' and the attendant torrent of odes and epigrams took the town; Horace Walpole pronounced "the poetry and wit superlative. . . . As good as the 'Dunciad,' . . . with more ease."



Mr Ellis was now over thirty, and we find him soon more seriously occupied. He was in diplomacy, and in 1785 accompanied Sir James Harris (afterwards Lord Malmesbury) to The Hague, and later wrote a history of the Revolution in Holland, a book not easy to come by.

A bachelor of social habits and lively conversation, he lived in closest intimacy with the Malmesburys. And now, at last, we have a picture of George Ellis and of the tastes, sympathies, and accomplishments that made him an inimitable companion. Lady Malmesbury and her sister, Lady Minto, were equally active in mind and wielded equally expressive pens, but differed so completely in their plan of life that they might have been contrasted female types in a moral paper of 'The Spectator.' Lady Malmesbury, the ambassadress, lived at Courts, was *au courant* with all that was agitating Europe, and discoursed gossip and politics with equal mastery. Lady Minto was a country lady who had taken her husband's Border home to her English heart, improved his estate, farmed and planted, superintended her children's education. The bond between these two busy women was so close that they wrote to each other every second day. Mr Ellis was devoted to both, but more seriously admired Lady Minto: "Your soul" is Lady Malmesbury's name for him when writing to her sister. "I can't tell you," she writes again, "how much Mr Ellis admires you for teaching your boys Latin." In the meantime the imperious little Ambassadress kept him busy ministering to her higher needs. When an educational wave swept, as it does at times, over the fashionable world, Mr Ellis reads Newton's "Optics" aloud while Lady Malmesbury nets a purse,—“for sublime as I am, I still condescend to work.” There again Mr Ellis's talents are called in. She is enchanted with his designs for tapestried chairs. "One is periwinkle and a yellow rose — exquisite! Another crocuses and geraniums; border, geranium leaves—divine!" These embroidered

chairs are probably still in existence, though perhaps "smoked in attics or in auction sold." In the June evenings of 1791, when they were sewn, the nightingales were singing in the woods round Grove Place, and some "pleasant men from town of our own set" sat up half the night with my lord and my lady, discussing the news from France.

Restless and wilful, neither nightingales nor hot English Junes nor pleasant men sufficed Lady Malmesbury, and she must needs carry off my lord and his secretary to Italy, though they "roared" at the project. The Italian tour was not a great success. The weather was wet, and we are forced to believe that travellers in those days had a veil over their eyes when we read the date "Venice" above the following sentence: "Lord Malmesbury and Mr Ellis *s'ennuyent à la mort*, and in truth it is not gay." Views of Saturn through his fine new telescope and the lizards on his balcony at Naples, "which he loves of all things," were the chief delights Italy afforded Mr Ellis.

If we had all her ladyship's letters instead of tantalisingly entertaining fragments, the case might not look so black against Mr Ellis's æsthetic perceptions. In literature, at any rate, he had the delicate and decided taste that comes of devoted and disinterested study.

The year before the Italian journey (1790) he had brought out a selection of short poems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This charming anthology has never been superseded. We, the general readers of this generation, hardly realise how deep a trench the 'Golden Treasury,' by its excellence, has dug between us and much of our older literature, till we turn over George Ellis's *Specimens* and find a large proportion of names unfamiliar. Alone among anthologies, this selection courteously takes for granted that the greater poets are already familiar to the reader, and has the courage to "take Lycidas for read." It is doubtless due to Ellis's

distinct preference for what is light, restrained, and of finished workmanship, that there is perfect continuity in these songs of two centuries. It is almost as if some magic flute had passed from one generation to another; the measures and melodies vary, the notes are the same. The explanation is partly to be found in the charming little bits of biography that accompany each poet. From first to last they record how this young gentleman or that was "entered at Wolsey's College of Christ Church," or "having been educated at the Charterhouse was for some time scholar at Pembroke College, Cambridge." The endings of these young poets are more varied: some are "promoted to a canonry and die archdeacons," some become "deputy lieutenants and justices of the peace"; more die prematurely, "too much addicted to pleasure and contempt of wealth."

When it was objected to this anthology that it consisted almost exclusively of love-songs, Mr Ellis "can only lament with his readers that beautiful poetry is more frequently calculated to inflame imagination than to chasten morals, without being able to remedy such a perversion of talent."

Mr Ellis's early alliance with the Whigs had been the natural attraction of wits and good-fellowship, but the French Revolution, which broke up so many older and more important alliances, shifted him definitely on to the Ministerial side.

It was sometime in 1797 that he was introduced to Pitt by Canning. The meeting was at the house of Mr Dundas, who had been as roughly handled as his leader in the 'Rolliad.' There were awkward recollections in the minds of all present. A bystander, incredibly ill-natured or more incredibly blundering, asked Ellis pointedly concerning his share in the satire. Then St Virgil, who might well have resented the liberty taken with his poem, magnanimously protected his votary,

prompting Pitt to the happiest and most generous of quotations:—

“Imo age, et a prima dic hospes origine nobis  
Insidias . . .”

With equal delicacy and humour he left the “error-  
esque tuos” of the following line to be inferred. Scott  
used to refer to this anecdote as the occasion on which  
“Pitt out-quizzed Ellis.”

Ellis had been a young man among the wits of the  
‘Rolliad’; he was now a man of forty-four, a diplomat  
and member of Parliament, but his grace of manner,  
his habit of listening, attracted brilliant young men  
to his society, while his quick spirit and reckless  
wit made him still prompt in audacious enterprise.  
Whether, as Dean Milman avers, he initiated the  
poetry of the ‘Anti-Jacobin’ or not, he was from first to  
last at the very heart of the business. The confidential  
meetings of the contributors took place at Lady Malmes-  
bury’s house in Park Place, a house which was a second  
home to Ellis.

It was only twelve years since he had helped to  
launch personalities against the party in whose service  
he was now sharpening his pen, but it was a changed  
world and a new generation. Satire had need of keener  
weapons than personalities if it was to meet and scorch  
revolutionary views and sentiments in politics, literature,  
and morals.

The writers of the ‘Rolliad’ had been like daws, chatter-  
ing, scolding, filching straws, doing mischief; the satirists  
of the ‘Anti-Jacobin’ were like young hawks in their sharp-  
ness of vision, force of flight, swiftness of onslaught.  
Canning and Frere—the two moving spirits—had left  
Eton with nothing to learn in literary form; for them  
at least classical training had done her perfect work.  
Of the poetry of the ‘Anti-Jacobin’ we need not speak  
here; it is still with us, moving fresh generations to

laughter, still arresting our pulses with pleasure in its point and force, still making its appeal to common-sense, patriotism, tradition, and prejudice.

Ellis would seem to have been sole author of only a few of the lighter pieces, but he added lines here and there in the poems of Canning and Frere. It is pleasant to believe that he shared with Pitt the honourable suspicion of having added a verse to Rogero's song, "The U-niversity of Göttingen." There is a touch of inspiration that one would eagerly claim for Ellis if Frere's fine literary instinct and Canning's quality of imagination were only out of the way. After the 'Anti-Jacobin' had run its sparkling course for a year, Pitt's prudence caused its sudden cessation. On Monday, 9th July 1798, the tricky spirit which had laboured and rioted a twelvemonth long was dismissed:—

"We shall miss thee—  
And yet thou shalt have freedom.  
So, to the elements!  
Be free and fare thee well."

So happy a quotation has the force of an original stroke of genius with the added beauty of the echoes it awakens.

It was Ellis's amiable characteristic that all his pursuits, diplomacy, politics, satire, literature, led him into new friendships. In 1800 he had carried his literary researches farther back, was engaged on an earlier volume of *Specimens* and on a volume of *Metrical Romances*. Frere, though classical as much by instinct as by training, shared the reviving interest in Early English studies, and produced some good imitations; but Canning, certainly the dearer of the two to Ellis, made no pretence of sharing his tastes. When Ellis referred to his studies in Romance as his "hobby-horse," Canning had answered, "Hobby-horse! Yours is an elephant!" It was to this sagacious elephant that Ellis was to



owe the latest, dearest, and most romantic friendship of his life.

But here the story must leave Ellis for a little and introduce the man who, more than any of his generation, made it his office to bring the right kind of people together. Richard Heber was exactly Scott's contemporary. He was one of the scholars who amaze their contemporaries by omnivorous acquisition of knowledge, but add nothing to it as a testimony to posterity. Oxford had equipped him for the editing of the obscurest Latin authors; then the recently aroused interest in mediæval literature got hold of him, and he might have done good work in this field had not a still more enthralling pursuit captivated his fancy.

Richard Heber was a very rich man. Sumptuousness is, indeed, the idea one naturally associates with both the Hebers; "gold from the mine" runs through Reginald's hymns and glitters in the calf and gilt bindings of the superb books that were—in Lockhart's phrase—"the Delilahs of Richard's imagination." He was still at Oxford when he fell under the spell. A copy of Peacham's 'Valley of Varieties' was acquired at a sale. "A rare book?" he asked an authority. "Yes; not very—but rather curious." And the deed was done, and Heber started on the pursuit that combines the joys of the chase, of learning, and of shopping. To these he added the more original and troubled joy of magnificent lending.

In the last years of the eighteenth century, when the Continent was closed to English travellers, Edinburgh was the resort of many intellectual young Englishmen. Heber, like many another, may have been originally drawn to Edinburgh by the fame of Dugald Stewart. But it is not in the lecture-hall that we find him, but in a modest book-shop in the High Street, where Constable, the handsome young bookseller, advertised

"Scarce old books." There, in the back-shop, hanging on a ladder, a folio in his hand, he had discovered John Leyden.<sup>1</sup>

Scott was already an intimate, and Heber, who shared his friends as generously as his books, brought the two Borderers together. Heber threw himself heartily into the society of Edinburgh, not eschewing the conviviality of its clubs. One night he and Scott had left a party just before dawn. The moon was still up, and by her romantic light the two friends had climbed up Arthur's Seat, returning with rare appetites for breakfast. They had probably talked ballads and romances all the way.

Heber left Scott and Leyden in the Advocates' Library keenly excited over an old version of "Sir Tristrem" discovered in the Auchinleck MS.; he found on his return south George Ellis engaged on the Metrical Romances of Marie de France. Here was an opportunity for Heber's special art. The introduction was made, and one of Scott's warmest friendships was preluded by months of courteous and stimulating correspondence,—correspondence that is found formally in Lockhart's 'Life' and essentially in the fascinating notes and appendices to "Sir Tristrem."

The correspondents were attracted as much by their differences as their sympathy. Ellis's treatment of mediæval Romance is quite eighteenth-century. He never affects archaic language nor attempts to reproduce atmosphere. The excellent lucidity of his style allows the lively quality of the tales to have their due effect, while a delicate, pervasive irony points their absurdity or unreality. No quotation could give any idea of the peculiar humour woven into the stuff of this work. It has been characterised as Voltairean, but Chaucer had also touches of sly enjoyment and ironical criticism of his own creations, not unlike Ellis's. Scott has most

See *ante*, p. 114.

happily described this humour in the fifth Epistle in 'Marmion':—

“Thou, who canst give to lightest lay  
An unpedantic moral gay,  
Nor less the dullest theme bid flit  
On wings of unexpected wit ;  
In letters as in life approved,  
Example honoured, and beloved.”

The older man, the man of taste and social experience and critical habit, found himself carried away by his correspondent into the very region of Romance. Scott and Leyden were labouring to prove that their MS. “Sir Tristrem” was indisputably the work of Thomas of Ercildoune, a Border man, practically a neighbour on Tweed-side, though at a distance of six centuries. They tried to identify the mysterious kingdom of Reged, whither the romanised Britons, retreating from the Saxons, had carried the Arthurian tradition, with their own Border country. Scott used playfully to date his Ashestiel letters from “Reged.”

We have to remember that in those early, obscure days Scott and Leyden were bracketed together in the minds of Southern antiquaries and men of letters. Both breathed the same romantic air, both treated their favourite studies with the same enthusiasm,—only one was Sir Valentine, the courtly knight, the other Sir Orson, the child of nature. And George Ellis, the eighteenth-century wit, had a heart for both.

He and Scott met in 1801. Ellis was newly married, and was living at Sunning Hill, on the confines of Windsor Park. Scott was captivated by his host's conversation; “he had more wit, learning, and knowledge of the world than would fit out twenty *literati*.” In retrospect Scott was almost abashed by the older man's habit of sympathetic listening. “George Ellis was the best converser I ever knew. His patience and good-breeding made me often ashamed of myself, going off

at score upon some favourite topic." Scott alone among his contemporaries was unaware of the spell that fell upon his listeners when he went "off at score upon some favourite topic."

No one put higher value on fine manners than Walter Scott; no one could be more diverted by the total absence of them, especially in those whose qualities of heart and head he knew and valued. We have seen how highly he rated the courtesy of Ellis; we know too how, half amused, half aghast, and wholly affectionately, he had watched Leyden's good-humoured but eccentric appearances in Edinburgh society. Most of us have friends of both orders. If we keep our affection for each carefully separated, it is because we do not sufficiently trust our Ellises. Scott made no such mistake. He credited Ellis with having, no less than himself, intuition into characters at the opposite pole from himself. Ellis justified the confidence. When Leyden came to stay at Sunning Hill his demeanour was a constant feast to host and hostess alike. There is such a tender humour in Ellis's account of the visit that those familiar with Lockhart must forgive its being quoted again at length.

Scott had sent his poem, "Cadyow Castle," by Leyden. "Let me thank you," writes Ellis, "for your poem, which Mrs Ellis has not received, and which, indeed, I could not help feeling glad, in the first instance, that she did not receive. Leyden would not have been your Leyden if he had arrived like a careful citizen with all his packages carefully docketed in his portmanteau. . . . If he had *not* arrived with all his ideas perfectly bewildered—and tired to death and sick—and without any settled plans for futurity or any accurate recollection of the past—we should have felt more disappointed than by the non-arrival of your poem. . . . In short, his whole air and countenance told us, 'I am come to be one of your friends,' and we immediately took him at his word."

From Leyden, of the grateful heart, Scott had a description of this same visit in such "quaint English" as Thomas of Ercildoune might have used. To this poem we owe our knowledge of Ellis's appearance:—

"His eyen gray as glass been,  
And his looks been all so keen  
Lovely to paramour :  
Brown as an acorn is his faxe,  
His face as thin as battle-axe  
That dealeth dintis dour."

Loud-voiced, excitable, and always "going off at score upon some favourite topic," yet Leyden always found favour with well-bred women. His single-mindedness appealed to them. Mrs Ellis's kindness and pretty ways won the warm heart of Sir Orson:—

"Her wit is full keen and queynt,  
And her stature small and gent,  
Seemly to be seen.  
Armes, hands, and fingers small,  
A pearl beth each finger-nail :  
She might be Fairy Queen."

The material for a portrait of Ellis is so meagre and at the same time so attractive that one is inclined to linger over it as he did over the 'Minstrely'—like a schoolboy with a bit of ginger-bread, . . . endeavouring to *look* it into larger dimensions."

Recently a copy of Ellis's Specimens was sold which had belonged to Heber. Stuck into it, haphazard, was a note in Ellis's small, distinct handwriting, short, but containing all one would like to find there:<sup>1</sup>—

MY DEAR HEBER,—I have received a large parcel of "that series of dots and scratches that Heber expects one to accept for written characters," as Walter Scott says, and now return it with a few glossarial notes. . . . Upon the whole—but for my anxiety

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<sup>1</sup> The finder was W. P. Ker, by whose kind permission this letter is quoted here.



that you should not have wasted so much trouble to no purpose, I should be disposed to hesitate about printing this extract at all, because it seems to have little merit. If you think otherwise, perhaps the introduction could run thus. . . . I am sorry to hear that you are going to steal Leyden even for a few days, but trust to your coming here again before his departure. Lady-fair sends her love."

Good gifts had showered upon Ellis in his old age. His marriage, though late, was singularly happy. "Lady-fair" had won Leyden's heart by kindness; her love of dogs, and especially her appreciation of Camp, gave her a place of her own in Scott's esteem. She had a generous toleration of her husband's "hobby-horse." On their very wedding-day he spent the evening reading aloud to her Scott's MS. play, "The House of Aspen." It was just such an act of romantic friendship as Amil in the romance would have done for Amis, but Amil's bride would never have shown the complacency of Ellis's kind Lady-fair! Ways and means in the Ellis's household were ample. Lady Malmesbury tells a story of Ellis's nephew, Charles Ellis, good enough for a romance. "Charles Ellis, on receiving his fortune on coming of age, wrote a most charming letter to George Ellis, enclosing ten notes of £1000 each: this is a sort of Belcour trait that Sir Gilbert will admire."

The pleasant house at Sunning Hill was the meeting-place for the best wits of the age. There Scott wrote two cantos of 'Marmion'; there under the oak-trees he read the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' aloud; there, after 1808, Canning came down to collaborate in articles for the 'Quarterly.' By 1807 the shadow of ill-health had fallen on the kind master of the house. With all his amenity he could not comply with the affectionate exhortation that closes the Epistle in 'Marmion':—

" . . . but O!

No more by thy example teach,

—What few can practise, all can preach,—

With even patience to endure  
Lingering disease, and painful cure,  
And boast affliction's pangs subdued  
By mild and manly fortitude.  
Enough, the lesson has been given :  
Forbid the repetition, Heaven !”

In 1815 George Ellis died. With his death ended much of Scott's best happiness in his visits south. Henceforth these were chiefly confined to London, and were a whirl of parties, introductions, and compliments, to all of which the lion submitted good-humouredly: but the best thing was lacking. In 1820, when at the height of success, he wrote to Morritt: “London I thought incredibly tiresome; I wanted my sheet-anchors,—you and poor George Ellis,—by whom I could ride at quiet moorings without mixing entirely with the great vortex.”

## SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

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THERE was no family with whom the fortunes and affections of Walter Scott were so intimately associated as with the children of Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo. His eldest son, the seventh Sir William, was the husband of Scott's unforgotten first love; two daughters were the wives of two of Scott's dearest friends, James Skene and Colin Mackenzie; even "Maida," Scott's beautiful deer-hound, was connected with the house of Forbes, being the gift of Macdonnell of Glengarry, the husband of a third daughter of old Sir William.

There is no figure in eighteenth-century Edinburgh quite like Sir William Forbes. His character stands as much apart from the hard-headed, hard-drinking lawyers, witty, sociable *liverati*, and rationalistic Presbyterian ministers, as his noble figure and refined, forcible features stand out from the rugged, expressive, genial faces around him.

Born in 1739, Sir William was at the time of the '45 a little schoolboy living with his mother, Lady Forbes, in Aberdeen, her one surviving child. The family fortunes were very low; the estate of Monymusk had been sold two generations previously; Sir William's father had died just as he was beginning to get on at the Bar; for years the boy and his mother lived on a spare income of a hundred a-year. In the summer they visited

his grandmother and his two maiden aunts at a farm on his uncle's estate of Bogny. They were stately ladies, these aunts, always dressed in long trains and sleeves with ruffles. Very stately and very poor, and—one may add—very upright and pious, were all the boy's relations. Politically the family were divided. One of little Sir William's guardians, Lord Forbes, held by the Hanoverian Government, but another guardian, his grand-uncle, was the famous Lord Pitsligo. It was impossible to keep from the boy the anxiety and distress felt by all his kin for the noble old man when he was a fugitive with a price on his head. Lady Forbes's own grandfather had been out in the '15, and it is not difficult guessing which side the ladies' secret sympathies would be on. Prudence perhaps kept these Jacobite sympathies from being obtruded into the boy's education, but where religion was concerned the only compromise the widow would consent to was that she attended in Aberdeen a "qualified chapel"—*i.e.*, one in which the officiating clergyman was a member of the Church of England. Even in these licensed chapels political disaffection, as Captain Burt found, showed itself by the congregation rising from their knees when the petitions in the Litany for the reigning family were read, and standing in negligent attitudes till they were ended.

We forget that Scotland has had two persecuted Churches. After the '45 the laws against non-juring Episcopal congregations were so harsh that babes had to be baptised in the open field, and congregations stood outside in the snow while, inside the tiny thatched parsonage, the clergyman repeated the Communion Office to successive small groups, as a larger gathering than the actual household and four strangers was illegal.

So, in the shadow of a lost cause, a repressed Church, and straitened means, William Forbes grew up patient of labour, equable in either fortune, tender of suffering. There was a strain of singular devoutness in the Forbes



SIR WILLIAM FORBES, 7TH BARONET OF PITSLIGO AND MONYMUSK.

*After the Picture by George Sanders.*





blood. On one side of the house was Lord Pitsligo, who, in caves and holes of the earth, had seemed to break the bread of angels, such simple joy he found in doing and suffering the will of God. From his mother—she was also a Forbes by birth—Sir William received such impressive lessons of religion that throughout his life, he tells us, he could never entertain any doubts on the subject, and for this he thanked God as for his greatest blessing. The sight of her grave, cloistered, consistent life kept the religious habit alive in him through his busy prosperous years.

Commerce in the eighteenth century (and earlier) constantly supplied openings for the sons of noble Scottish families, even when counting-houses and shops were not so sharply divided as they have been for a century past. By the advice of an old friend of his father's William Forbes was apprenticed to the Messrs Coutts, at one time corn factors but now chiefly bankers, living on the President's stair in the Parliament Close.

The fifty years of Sir William Forbes's banking life coincided with extraordinary expansion and prosperity in Scotland. Of this development banks were at once the sign and the cause, and Sir William became in time the ablest banker in Scotland. In finance, indeed, the "canny Scot" has too often been a reckless speculator, but, like Sir Walter Scott, Sir William "thought commercial honour was to be preserved as unsullied as personal," while his wise moderation never put it in peril. In 1772, when the bankruptcy of Alexander Fordyce pulled down half the banks in Scotland, and again in 1792, when the war scare shook credit all over Britain, Sir William's bank met the crisis without a tremor.

His mother accompanied him to Edinburgh, and at first they boarded with an old acquaintance, a book-seller's widow, paying twenty pounds each a-year for board and lodging. A little later they had a flat in Forrester's Wynd, consisting of two rooms, a kitchen, and

a small bed-closet. One maid sufficed for their modest needs. Once a-year Lady Forbes, with much ceremony, entertained her son's employers at supper, otherwise she saw but little company. A few old friends, North country lairds and widowed ladies of quality, would drink tea with her sometimes of an afternoon.

Formal and subdued one imagines these little parties to have been. Mrs Cockburn with her wild wit and exhaustless zest in life would hardly have felt at home there, nor Anne Keith with her love of cards and belles-lettres and her vivid interest in social ongoing. Lady Forbes's heart was set on other things, and when Sir William, now the prosperous head of the Bank, married the beautiful Miss Hay of Haystoun and settled his home in the New Town, his mother was free to live as it pleased her. It was such an ordered, devout life as one of the ladies of Port Royal might have led. She attended on week-days and Sundays one of those Episcopal meeting-houses which, as Captain Burt tells us, were found up some quiet wynd or in some back court, lived always frugally, gave largely in alms, kept her "death clothes" always by her in a drawer, and read constantly in such books as the 'Imitation of Jesus Christ' and the 'Meditations of St Augustine,'—books for which her son, in the true spirit of the eighteenth century, rather quaintly apologises, as being "very good in their way but not now much noticed."

A limited life, perhaps, and lacking in colour compared to the gay hospitality and witty conversation of some of her contemporaries and neighbours; yet it is not fanciful to say of this widow's mite cast into the treasury of the nation's spiritual life, "She hath done more than they all." If, far into the nineteenth century, there was to survive in the Scottish Episcopal Church a tradition of the beauty of holiness, of the grace of disciplined character, and of quiet service of the poor, it was largely owing to the impress left by Sir William Forbes and to

devout men and women among his descendants—Forbeses, Skenes, and Mackenzies. If Sir William's first care was to serve the depressed Church of his fathers, to heal the breaches within her walls, to draw her into closer fellowship with the Church of England, to put her on a sound financial basis, his personal sympathies set no limits on his general charities. When, partly by inheritance, partly by purchase, the lands of Pitsligo came into his hands, a Presbyterian church and manse grew up opposite the Episcopal chapel and parsonage.

The records of every charity in Edinburgh would supply an ample commentary on Sir Walter's sincere and sober eulogy:—

“If mortal charity dare claim  
The Almighty's attributed name,  
Inscribe above his mouldering clay:  
‘The widow's help, the orphan's stay.’”

Such a man was bound to be trustee and guardian for half his acquaintance. What other “Legacy”—beside the little book so-called—Dr Gregory left to his “daughters” was under his trusteeship; even during Dr Beattie's life the care of his poor mad wife devolved on this generous friend. In all Sir William's business transactions his conscience could only record one act of duplicity. When Beattie's *Essay against Hume* was returned by the booksellers, Sir William not only paid the cost of publication in conjunction with another friend, but had the art to persuade the simple-minded author that a cheque for fifty pounds was merely his anticipated share of the profits! Boswell first consulted Dr Johnson on the qualities necessary for a trustee, and, finding them all in perfection in Sir William, appointed him guardian to his children and his literary executor. The first office was admirably fulfilled, the second might have been better in less conscientious hands. Sir William had seen and greatly enjoyed Boswell's ‘*Tour in the*

Hebrides' and the journals relating to Dr Johnson in MS., but in Boswell's posthumous journals and correspondence the biographer of Beattie probably found a good deal that perplexed his judgment. He took the luckless course of restoring the papers to Boswell's relatives, who, to save their kinsman's credit,—a thankless effort,—deprived the world of much innocent pleasure by burning them. Boswell's attitude towards virtue was like that of Johnson's "pious" friend Dr Campbell, who never entered a church, but always took off his hat when passing one. It is pleasant to have his assurance that Sir William was at once "a good Christian and a good companion." It is Boswell, too, who tells us that once when Sir William was ill he "was watched with the anxious apprehension of a general calamity, and when he recovered *Te Deum* was the universal chorus from the hearts of his countrymen."

A Whig and a Presbyterian, it is probable Walter Scott the elder was not in the inner circle of Sir William's friends, but there was evidently a cordial respect between the punctilious old lawyer in George Square and the stately benevolent banker in the Parliament Close.

From passages in Sir Walter's Journal it is probable that he and the young Forbeses were thrown together in those "bickers" in which even the best brought up of Edinburgh schoolboys took a fierce delight. (Did not even gentle, gifted Patrick Fraser Tytler rush into his sister's room with face streaming with blood, crying: "Wash my face quick! and let me get out again to the 'bicker'")? Later came the social life of young men in a gay society,—dances, drinking, suppers, rivalries in sports,—and then, as fate would have it, Scott's planet and young William Forbes's crossed one another.

There was no one to blame. From the reticent pages of Lockhart, and now from passages of subdued passion in the Journal, we know as much as it is right for us to know of one of the purest and most affecting of



love-stories. More recently<sup>1</sup> we have been told as much as concerns us of the story from the other side. The candour and frankness of the lady are as unquestioned as "the meekness of her manners"—the phrase is his own—which misled Scott to his undoing. Her mother was in her confidence, and she was under no doubt that from the first evening she met him, young William Forbes occupied a peculiar place in her daughter's regard. Handsome, high-bred, sincere and ardent, modest to the pitch of shyness, and deeply in love,—the story surely needs no explanation!

When in October 1796 young Walter Scott rode away from Fettercairn, he knew that his rival was to succeed him as a guest.

There is a situation apt to recur in old tales and romances and in old-fashioned novels, an interchange, namely, of services and courtesies between two who are rivals in love and in arms. Even in crude and simple forms this *motif* affords the reader a thrill of satisfaction; when worked out naturally and subtly as it is in 'Old Mortality,' he is conscious of a sympathy, heightening at every interchange, till at last it ends in something like exultation. Even such a generous rivalry between the two men who loved her sweetens for ever the memory of Williamina Stuart Belches.

Her marriage was ideally happy, so happy that she and her husband lived much for one another retired from the world, so that it is possible that she and Scott rarely or never met.

In 1807, when Scott was writing the introductory epistles to 'Marmion,' old Sir William Forbes died. Eleven years before, in the brief bitterness of disappointed hopes, Scott had written to Erskine of the two Forbesees as "the formal cavalier and his son." But time had taken the soreness from the wound—

<sup>1</sup> In Miss Skene's "Sir Walter Scott's First Love," in the 'Century Magazine,' July 1899.

"though the scar was to remain to his dying day." One cannot help thinking that the noble lines on old Sir William in the epistle to James Skene were prompted by the thought of those who would read them and feel the generous conciliation that breathed through them:—

"Scarce had lamented Forbës paid  
His tribute to his Minstrel's shade;  
The tale of friendship scarce was told,  
Ere the narrator's heart was cold,—  
Far may we search before we find  
A heart so manly and so kind!"

In 1810, at the age of thirty-four, she whom Scott had called "*la chère adorable*," whom the world knew as "the charming Lady Forbës," died, leaving six children and a husband so heart-stricken that for years he lived secluded from the world.

In 'Rokeby' (written in 1812), Scott allowed himself to draw a portrait of the lady who had glorified and saddened his youth, who all his life was to haunt his dreams. An attentive reader may, in various little touches of description and of emotion, catch her shadow in other heroines of the novels and poems. Perhaps the nearest approach to self-betrayal is the passage in the 'Lady of the Lake,' where the poet speaks of Dreams:—

"Then,—from my couch may heavenly might  
Chase that worst phantom of the night!—  
Again returned the scenes of youth,  
Of confident undoubting truth.  
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They come, in dim procession led,  
The cold, the faithless, and the dead."

When first Scott read the MS. aloud at Buchanan, Lady Louisa Stuart noted, as we have seen, the subdued emotion with which he discussed the passage.

In the time of Scott's disaster Sir William Forbes was

among the first to come to his assistance, a friend strong, reassuring, liberal.

“At a meeting of creditors,” Scott writes, “Sir William Forbes took the chair, and behaved, as he has always done, with the generosity of ancient faith and early friendship.”

Sir William Forbes had not only the chivalrous spirit of his race, he had the habit of unhesitating giving characteristic of the best men of business. When Abud the Jew, alone among Scott's creditors, was urgent for payment and threatening, Sir William Forbes, all unknown to Scott, paid the two thousand pounds out of his own pocket, counting only as a common creditor. In 1828 he died.

That the last touch of old romance should not be lacking, the monuments of these two noble rivals are situated not far distant from each other. At one end of the fairest street in Europe—in Sir Walter's “own romantic town”—stands his monument; at the other, the Episcopal Church of St John, built by the efforts and gifts of Sir William Forbes.

## JAMES SKENE AND COLIN MACKENZIE.

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THE first chapters of 'Waverley' belong less of right to that fascinating romance than to the autobiography of the author. The adventures of Edward Waverley begin at the Castle of Tulley-Veolan; the studies and the dreaming belong to Walter Scott. One of these two romantic young men once wrote a set of verses on seeing a peaceful lake broken by a sudden tempest:—

"In wild and broken eddies whirled,  
Flitted that fond ideal world,  
And to the shore in tumult tossed  
The realms of fairy bliss were lost.  
So on the idle dreams of youth  
Breaks the loud trumpet-call of truth,  
Bids each fair vision pass away  
Like landscape on the lake that lay.  
While dreams of love and ladies' charms  
Give place to honour and to arms."

There was nothing in Edward Waverley's experience to warrant such strong emotion; there was much in Scott's.

Fortunately for Scott, the days of his broken hopes were also days when war was in the air and men spoke gravely of invasion. In October 1796 he had ridden away from Fettercairn, in February 1797 he was ab-

sorbed in the project of raising the Edinburgh Light Horse. Of Scott's life-long friends, some date from the Parliament House, some from the 'Minstrelsy,' and more from the Edinburgh Light Horse, and among these were James Skene and Colin Mackenzie.

James Skene, Scott's junior by four years, was a young Aberdeenshire laird about to be called to the Bar. He had, like Scott, attended the Edinburgh High School, and later had passed two years in Germany. His knowledge of German literature and language was an attraction to Scott, who was much given to those studies at the time.

On both sides James Skene came of remarkable ancestry. The Skenes were an old stock which had held lands in Aberdeenshire since the days of Malcolm Canmore. Younger sons of good Scots families have for centuries been forced to seek their fortunes abroad. The instinct for trade has been as strong as the love of arms in the blood of Scotsmen, gentle or simple. While the Quentin Durwards gained honours from French kings and, later, in the service of Sweden or Germany, their cousins, equally resolute and perhaps more long-sighted, were settled at Campvere or Dantzic or the cities of Poland, and were carrying on trade so successfully that more than once the natives demanded legislative measures against these too capable aliens.

Thus we find at the end of the seventeenth century a certain George Skene returning, a rich man, from Dantzic, gracing the position of provost of Aberdeen, buying an estate, and thus founding the house of the Skenes of Rubislaw.

Even more romantic was Skene's descent on the other side. His mother was a Moir of Stoneywood, the family whose fortunes during the eighteenth century are told in Dr Brown's 'Jacobite Family.' One wonders how much Mrs Skene remembered and could tell her children of the anxious days after Culloden when Stoneywood was full of English soldiers. She must have been one of the



seven children, sleeping perforce in their mother's room on the night when, in the darkness, the tap came to the window, and the mother, rising swiftly and silently, admitted her fugitive husband to spend at least one night among his own.

She lived on to a great age this faithful Jacobite lady, only dying in 1802. Her husband and all her children but two had long been dead when her grandson James Skene used to visit her in her old-fashioned house in Aberdeen. After the dangers and sorrows they had faithfully shared, she and her old maid—the one nearly blind, the other very deaf—sat placidly knitting on either side of the fireplace. They were generally settled down to cards and quarrelling over the tricks by five o'clock, when Mr Skene, on his way out to dine, used to call to inquire for his grandmother's welfare and to be graciously invited to kiss her cheek. The young man's eye was then and always quick to perceive whatever was quaint and humorous, his heart quick to understand what was human and touching.

Taking one thing with another,—the years of intimacy, the pursuits and pleasures shared, the charm of conversation or of contented confederate silences, the confidences, the common memories, the "heart affluence" on either side,—Skene was probably the dearest of all Scott's friends.

He had shared the life at Ashestiel—that almost perfect realising of a poet's dream. He fished the Tweed and made friends, over salmon flies, with Tom Purdie, who liked him better than any other of Scott's intimates. Scott was more a lover of fishermen than of fishing. It was the same with sketching. His inability to draw and love of landscape made him an uncritical admirer of his friend's sketches. The description of that superfluous character, Dudley, the artist, in 'Guy Mannering' is evidently suggested by Skene. Looked at to-day, the sketches are disappointing: they lack the romantic feeling and firm touch that make old Clerk of Eldin's etching still delight-

ful. It is especially with animals that this dog and horse lover fails. What does it matter? Such sketches were made when the sun shone on "holm and ha'" of Yarrow and Tweed, while Walter Scott traced inscriptions on old tombstones, and "Camp" and "Pandour" panted at their feet.

With his pen Skene drew pictures full of life and observation. He lived much abroad, and his journals, sketches, and lively anecdotes often brought grist to the untiring Waverley mill. To amuse Scott after one of his paroxysms of pain in 1817, Skene began to describe the life of the Jews as he had seen it in the ghettos of Germany. The seed fell into ground at that moment lying fallow and receptive, and Rebecca and Isaac of York were the fruit. When at work at 'Quentin Durward' Scott constantly referred to the journals and sketches of Skene's tour in Touraine.

The Introductions are often to the novels what lovely little *predellas* are to a masterpiece of some old painter. One of the most charming of these is the sketch of the gallant, impoverished French noble in the Introduction to 'Quentin Durward.' The incident was really an experience of Skene's. We, in turn, owe some of our happiest pictures of Scott's household life to the same sympathetic observation.

About Skene himself there are some pleasant stories. His Continental habits made him in some respects poor company for the Aberdeenshire lairds, his neighbours. Once staying at the house of his chief, Skene of Skene, he was detained till the small hours at the convivial table. When at last he was suffered to withdraw to his bedroom, he opened the window, jumped out, and walked home, seventeen miles, "in all the sweetness of a common dawn."

When, on a return visit, the old laird had arrived at a state of indiscriminating geniality, Mr Skene slipped away, leaving his decent Swiss servant to keep the old

gentleman in hand. One of the Skene boys was trusted to go salmon-fishing next morning with his father, and, rising at six, beheld from his window the old laird pursuing the grave respectful servant round the court, clamouring for another bottle, and refusing to go to bed!

The dearest friend is the friend on whom one instinctively makes the greatest demands. Scott received the final news of his bankruptcy on the evening of January 16, 1826; a verbal message requesting his presence reached Skene early next morning. By seven o'clock this kindest of friends, anxious but helpful, was in Sir Walter's dressing-room.

It was the same through the dark days that followed, Scott could go freely to his friend's house to escape from visitors and the task of making conversation. There was one day when his thoughts were so heavy that he declared himself unfit for any society but that of little six-year-old Felicia Skene. He had often told her fairy tales: "To-day, dearie, *you* must tell me a story"; and the quick-witted little creature actually beguiled him into laughter—a lovely memory for her to carry to the end of her life.

Day after day "that good Samaritan Skene" was ready to take Sir Walter for a walk in Princes Street Gardens. Even the universal goodwill and sympathy had something wounding to a spirit as proud and independent as Sir Walter's: Skene always understood; his speech or his silence was equally wise and apt. When Sir Walter sold his Edinburgh house and went into lodgings, Skene and his wife urged his coming to live with them,—an obviously impossible but beautifully hospitable plan.

It is characteristic of the society of that time that the women were primarily the wives of their husbands; yet Scott must have had a special confidence in Mrs Skene. In that touching interview he had with old

Lady Jane Stuart, the mother of his lost love,—the first after thirty years of silence,—it was by his particular request that Mrs Skene made a third at the meeting.

Skene survived Sir Walter thirty years. These years were spent partly in Greece, partly at Oxford, and were so full of new and varied interests that they must have seemed part of another life: but at the end his heart went back to the old days. We all hold different views on the subject of ghosts: there is at least one ghost story that we should all be glad to believe true. The story has been beautifully told by Skene's daughter.<sup>1</sup> It was shortly before his death; the old man had been left alone for a few minutes over his fire. "When I went back to him, . . . I found him with a look of radiant happiness upon his fine old face. 'Oh, come quick!' he exclaimed. 'I want to tell you of such a delightful surprise I have just had! Scott has been here! dear Scott! He told me he had come from a great distance to pay me a visit, and he has been sitting here with me talking of all our old happy days together. He said it was long since we had met; but he is not in the least changed: his face was just as cheerful and pleasant as it used to be; I have so enjoyed being with him.'"

Of Colin Mackenzie of Portmore in Peeblesshire, Skene's brother-in-law, we know less than of others of Scott's friends, partly because he was, as Lockhart describes him, "an accomplished and singularly modest man"; partly that, being like Scott one of the Clerks of Session, the two met daily, and consequently there was little correspondence between them. He and Scott had been at the High School together, and there Colin had been placed higher than Walter for a set of verses. At the time of the 'Minstrelsy' ballads were in the air, and all Scott's friends were taking the impulse from him.

<sup>1</sup> "Some Episodes in a Long Life"—'Blackwood's Magazine,' June 1896.



When Greek archæologists like Morritt were putting Highland legends into verse, and Christ Church scholars like Marriott were singing the rough humours of moss-troopers, Colin Mackenzie at least had his foot on his native heath in singing the triumph of the Chiefs of Kintail over the Lord of the Isles.

Of Mackenzie's business powers Scott had the highest opinion. He had the rarest and most potent of gifts both for public and private business, a courteous and sympathetic habit of listening. For "many men," as Scott observes, "care less to gain their point than to play the orator and be listened to for a certain time. This done . . . they are usually satisfied with the reasons of the civil listener who has suffered them to enjoy their hour of consequence."

It is at times of anxiety and disaster when fortunes are threatened or wrecked that the man of business has his hour. While other friends stand aghast and embarrassed he steps in, experienced and efficient, to advise, negotiate, and bring order out of chaos. In the anxious January days of 1826 Colin Mackenzie was no whit behind his two brothers-in-law in coming to Sir Walter's aid. "Colin Mackenzie entered, and, with his usual kindness, engages to use his influence to recommend some moderate proceeding to Constable's creditors such as may permit him to go on, and turn that species of property to account."

The last time the two old friends met was on July 8, 1830. Scott's own health had been grievously shaken, but the brave fight was going on unslackened. He had not known that he was to find Mr Mackenzie stricken with mortal sickness. Mrs Mackenzie and one of his daughters were with him, and years afterwards Miss Mackenzie would describe the sudden change in Sir Walter's face and the quick concern in his kind voice as he bent over his friend: "Colin, my dear Colin, what is this?"



VII.  
LITERARY LADIES

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ANNA SEWARD  
JOANNA BAILLIE



## ANNA SEWARD.

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"THE crossest thing I ever did in my life," wrote Walter Scott to Joanna Baillie in 1810, "was to poor, dear Miss Seward: she wrote me in an evil hour (I had never seen her, mark that!) a long and most passionate epistle upon the death of a dear friend whom I had never seen either, concluding with a charge not to attempt answering the said letter, for she was dead to the world, &c. *Never were commands more literally obeyed.* I remained as silent as the grave till the lady made so many inquiries after me that I was afraid of my death being prematurely announced by a sonnet or an elegy."

There are few things more humorously pathetic than the contrast between the comic despair with which Miss Seward's letters were received in 39 Castle Street and the deliberate enthusiasm and satisfaction with which they were composed in the Episcopal Palace at Lichfield.

If we would make acquaintance with the correspondent who gave Scott his lifelong horror of sentimental correspondence, we must picture a woman between fifty and sixty still bearing the traces of good looks, of a fine carriage, and with hair still auburn. There is a slight halt in her walk as she paces up and down the gallery where hang the picture by Lely

of her grandmother and her own picture by Romney, with a noticeable likeness betwixt them: "Only you would suppose the grandmotherliness reversed," Miss Seward once wrote, recognising that youth had slipped past. As she walks up and down she declaims poetry, Milton or Pope, or commits newer favourites by heart, or tries the effect of one of her own recent odes—for recitation is one of her accomplishments; and when she pays a visit to Mrs Hayley, "all the young men of genius in Derby" are invited to hear this tenth Muse strike the lyre.

An Episcopal Palace built in the reign of Charles II., with wide staircase and ample rooms looking out on smooth-shaven lawns and shrubberies sloping to the moat beyond, seems an unduly magnificent dwelling for a maiden lady with an income of £400 a-year; but Miss Seward had spent all her youth in the Palace, sentiment attached her to its walls, her sense of her own value scouted the idea of a narrower lodging. It seems almost inconceivable that an Episcopal Palace could be had on such easy terms; but in the eighteenth century the Bishops of Lichfield lived at their country seat of Eccles Hall. Johnson's first patron, Mr Walmsley, had tenanted the Palace; as lads both he and Garrick had been familiar with the stately reception-rooms.

When Anna Seward was a child of seven (1754), her father had left his remote parish of Eyam in Derbyshire, and as Canon of Lichfield had taken up his abode in the Cathedral precincts. His visits to his country parish were of the shortest and rarest. But his daughter, who could extract sentiment from every circumstance, attributed her love of "Ossianic scenery" to the rocky hillsides and sharp-cut "edges" around Eyam. It was a greater triumph of sentiment over bare fact when, at her father's death, she drew a touching picture of attached parishioners mourning

for the pastor who had neglected them for forty years.

Now a solitary woman of sixty in her empty Palace, she can fill rooms and corridors with the scenes and faces long passed away. In this snug little book-room forty years before she had sat writing "by a clear fire, the candles burning brightly." Father and mother are out at a card-party; Sally, her pretty sister, brings down two work-bags as a hint to the studious elder sister; and the beautiful child, Honora Sneyd, approaches for the evening's reading with Hawkesworth's "Aleanzor and Hamnet," her face bright with what her instructress calls "intellectual avidity."

In this big reception-room the Canon and his wife entertained a party in honour of Mr Porter, Dr Johnson's stepson, a prosperous merchant from Leghorn, and Miss Sally's quasi-accepted lover. Canons and their wives are occupied with ombre and quadril, but at Lichfield unmarried girls eschew the card-tables, and a party of young belles—with Sally in a light hat and gay ribbons, the centre of observation—are gathered in the window corners. Miss Porter in brocade and blue tissue—Dr Johnson's "dearest Lucy" had a showy taste in dress—enters, overshadowing a short, slender gentleman in a black velvet coat with waistcoat of gold profusely embroidered. "Like a mountebank doctor" is the impish thought that suggests itself to the critical elder sister, but though the idea is communicated that evening to the younger sister, Miss Sally has made up her steady mind to be Mrs Porter, and to start at once for Leghorn, taking Miss Anna as bridesmaid with her.

Alas! the dressing-room adjoining the sisters' room recalls the shattering of all these cheerful plans.

It is strangely like an illustration of some affecting tale of those times, the scene that that dressing-room recalls. It is Sally's bridal-day, but the bride has been



ill of a fever and cannot rise from her bed. In the afternoon she is better, and Anna has retired to her room to make a fresh toilet. She enters in a clean, rustling gown, and with that look of fine vitality that must always have been characteristic of her. But a change has come, the poor girl is lying fainting on her couch, Honora—with premature sensibility and collectedness—is supporting her head, the anguished parents stand helpless by the bed, and by the window, his head leaning on his hand, sits, sad and anxious, the accepted lover. One almost feels as if one had witnessed the scene in a tinted print of the period.

Miss Seward's feelings were more engaged in friendship than in love. A rather lukewarm love-affair with a Mr T—— in the army was shattered on the usual rock of ways and means,—but does not seem to have left much trace on her life. It was otherwise with her affection for her beautiful kinswoman, Honora Sneyd, who, after she was grown up, continued to be an inmate of the Seward household. These were the days when Major André—gallant and ill-fated—was stationed at Lichfield, and sighed for the fair Honora, not without response. At that time also Mr Lovel Edgeworth, the gay and elegant philosopher, brought Thomas Day, the philosopher of rapt looks and negligent attire, to discuss the education of women and the duties of wives with the sprightly and eloquent Anna and the lovely Honora. Miss Seward, it is clear, monopolised the conversation, and Miss Sneyd the proposals.

The serious courtships, and, later, the philosophic matrimonial experiments of Mr Thomas Day fell in these years, and the humour of the affair was not lost on Miss Seward, who gives it a large place in her 'Life of Dr Darwin.' It is the only evidence we have that she had any of that sense of humour, a larger infusion of which would have saved this clever woman from all her absurdities.

For Mr Edgeworth she came to have a feeling of hostility which that superior person accounts for in the way most flattering to himself. He had met Miss Seward for the first time at Dr Darwin's, and so responsive was the handsome young blue-stocking to the advances of the "graceful and spirited" stranger that Mrs Darwin thought it expedient to give the lady a hint by pointedly drinking to the health of "Mrs Edgeworth"—Mr Edgeworth's neglected first wife.

In later days the two philosophers had their bachelor establishment in the suburb of Stow, and there Mr Edgeworth organised archery parties and Mr Day deliberately cultivated the graces. It was the Misses Sneyd—the beautiful Honora, the sensible Elizabeth—who in turn refused Mr Day and in turn married Mr Edgeworth. Miss Seward escaped these perplexing decisions.

From our intimate acquaintance with the Edgeworth household—under successive mistresses—we know that Mr Edgeworth's stupendous egotism and alert priggishness cast no shadow on the household happiness. Sweet Honora was happy in her short married life. But she was apparently separated from the friends of her youth, and her cousin was at liberty to hint darkly at the gloom of her fate.

After Mrs Edgeworth's death the cult of her "lost Honora" became one of Miss Seward's sentimental luxuries. She had discovered a startling likeness to the companion of her youth in Romney's picture, "Serena, or the Triumph of Temper"; and that charming mezzotint hung constantly above her writing-table.

When Dr Johnson and Mr Boswell paid their visit to Lichfield in 1776 they dined at the Palace. In the even life of the Cathedral town the appearance of a well-dressed stranger was an event, and, without waiting for an introduction, Mr Seward—"a genteel, well-bred, dignified clergyman"—had invited Mr Boswell to his house. Later in the day he was formally introduced

by Dr Johnson, and that evening the pair went up from the "Three Crowns" to sup at the Palace.

There are few pages in Boswell so gentle as those which describe Johnson's visit to his native place. He took a pleasant pride in the pure English of his townsmen and their aristocratic ignorance of mechanical arts. He listened benignantly to the schemes of a broken-down old schoolfellow, accompanied one old lady to church, and only introduced Mr Boswell into the house of another after punctilious preparation. But at the Palace it is evident that the great moralist was bored. That evening Boswell garnered nothing but a discussion on volcanic soils. Johnson was impatient of Mr Seward's valetudinarianism, and on another occasion described him thus: "Sir, his ambition is to be a fine talker; so he goes to Buxton and such places where he may find people to listen to him." A fine-looking young woman of twenty-nine, Miss Seward might have enjoyed the same kindness that Dr Johnson showed to Miss Monckton, or, like Miss Burney, might have harvested for her journal the wit and wisdom that fell from the oracle; but she was too ambitious to be content with kindness, too provincial to forego the luxury of giving eloquent expression to her own views, even for the sake of hearing his conversation. This is her account: "Greatly as I admired Johnson's talents and formidable as I felt . . . his witty sophistry to be, yet did a certain quickness of spirit and zeal for the reputation of my favourite authors irresistibly urge me to defend them against his spleenful injustice, a temerity which I am well aware made him dislike me. . . ."

The fact is, she wearied him with her high-flown eulogies of other poets, and when she had provoked a growl of angry contradiction, she triumphantly accused him of envy and bitter grudging. Boswell insinuates that some busybody had told Miss Seward Johnson's

real opinion of her. Only some such definite blow to her *amour propre* accounts for the rancour with which she writes of him alive or dead. There are ugly passages in the lady's letters where she describes, without a touch of awe or pity, the sufferings of the great tortured soul and wearied body on Johnson's last visit to Lichfield.

If she could not go down to posterity as Dr Johnson's friend, she claimed the equality that enmity on his side would give her. When Johnson's letters to Mrs Piozzi appeared, she wrote to the editor: "Since I see so many Lichfield people mentioned whose visits were not more frequent than mine, and whose talents had no sort of claim to lettered attention, there can be no great vanity in believing that he would not pass me by in total silence. Therefore it is that I thank you for your suppressions."

Miss Seward's relations with the other luminary of Lichfield, Dr Darwin, were more intimate than with Dr Johnson but not essentially more cordial. She wrote a life of Dr Darwin, and here, giving free rein to that talent for gossip which she so wastefully restrains in her letters, she has made an animated and amusing chronicle of Lichfield society.

She had a grievance against the Doctor which poisoned all her recollections of him. He, an enthusiast for botany, had planted a little valley in the neighbourhood as a wild garden. The Muse having been introduced into this paradise, sat down, produced her tablets, and composed an ode which she declares not only contained the first idea of the Loves of the Plants but was actually incorporated into it and published *without acknowledgment* by Dr Darwin.

The names of both these philosophers, therefore, excite a restless antagonism in the literary woman, who missed their friendship because she measured her pretensions with theirs.

These pretensions rest mainly on her six volumes of published letters. The charm of letters lies in the personality which they reveal: in some respects Miss Seward's letters do not so much reveal as expose her personality. They were hardly addressed to her correspondents; they were certainly not directed to the waste-paper basket, as the best letters ought to be. They were composed, copied, and carefully laid aside for posterity. It is a wasteful plan; not the acutest writer can know what posterity will be interested in. To please and interest us Miss Seward should have foregone all raptures and sublimities and two-thirds of her literary criticisms, and devoted herself to gleaning anecdotes from old Mrs Johnson in the stationer's shop or from Mrs Lucy Porter at her tea-table. We should have been grateful to her had she been content to be the chronicler of that beautiful ecclesiastical Cranford, her native town.

A leisurely, picturesque, gently animated life they must have led, the dean and canons with their wives and daughters in the Cathedral Close, under the "umbrageous" limes. A canon, with a pretty wit, used to liken the whitewashed houses to the Milky Way. Neighbouring families spent a lifetime side by side. The young people, who had danced and practised archery together, lived on to tell each other disagreeable truths with the utmost frankness in middle life. The most outspoken of these came from a Dr Vyse. In their youth he and Miss Seward had exchanged sighs, but less courtly in middle life, he had said to her frankly, "Nancy, take the advice of an old friend and don't translate Horace till you know Latin." The lady took offence and not advice. We find some of these old friendships in the epitaphs they wrote for one another and hung up in the cathedral to catch the attention of "the ingenuous passer-by."

There was little strain or stress in the life. Miss Seward was once seriously concerned lest one of her friends should suffer from overwork. She enumerates



his toils,—the duties of a vicar-choral in the cathedral; the care of a widowed daughter; the secretaryship of a botanical society; weeding his flower-beds; labelling his seeds; besides the assiduous attention paid to two green frogs and some other pets. Music and gardening were the pursuits of this elegant and innocent society.

The sentiment for the “return to Nature” which was in the air was causing revolutions in gardens. The formality which we are assiduously restoring was being swept away to make room for wildernesses, cascades, shrubberies, and grottoes. Miss Seward was at times the guest of a notable Mrs Mompesson in Derbyshire, whose gardening operations make a pleasant green spot in the letters. “Mrs Mompesson became mistress of this estate at eighteen. She found mossy stone walls dividing trim gardens, a straight brook, and crowded orchards. Her fruit-trees remain, but stand on little verdant lawns. . . . In place of those ponderous walls she has winding shrubberies, and where flowers were arranged in ‘curious knots’ and box-borders we rove now among thickets of lilacs, roses, and woodbines. Instead of arbours that look like green wigs, we sit in root-houses and in the rocky hermitage.” (The “green wigs” were bowers of climbing roses or clematis; “root-houses” are the heather-thatched asylums for earwigs, surviving till the middle of last century; “rocky hermitages” were decorated with Derbyshire spars and oyster-shells.)

A remarkable “return to Nature” was displayed in a hall which Miss Seward’s neighbour, Sir Nigel Gresley, had, in her opinion, decorated “with singular happiness.” One side was adorned with a painting of forest scenery, the trees arching over the ceiling, winding paths ascending in perspective, real pales painted green a few inches from the walls aiding the infantile delusion. On the other side a painting of a Peak valley vied with the actual view seen through windows occupying the length of the room.

Miss Seward is merely the historian of an interesting moment in gardening and the cult of the picturesque. Beyond planting her smooth lawns with lilacs and eglantines in the fashion of the day, her one achievement was writing an eloquent letter to the dean and chapter in defence of the lime walk in the Close when certain valetudinarian members objected to them as being too "umbrageous."

The romantic nineteenth century, when it made complacent reflections on the "polished aridity" of the eighteenth, was apt to forget the noble music that sounded through the decades of the earlier century. Cathedrals were naturally centres where the great religious music of the time was beautifully rendered and familiarly studied. Lichfield possessed so fine a choir that Miss Seward, when in York Minster, did not hesitate to describe the music there as the "sound of scrannel pipes" compared to the music in her own less beautiful cathedral.

Her interest in music was quickened by a curious sentimental friendship with one of the vicars-choral, a Mr Saville, whom she characteristically nicknamed Giovanni. The vicars-choral inhabited a labyrinth of picturesque old houses, timbered, red-roofed, plastered in warm Gloire de Dijon shades of cream and yellow, crowded round little courts. These lodgings were far too narrow for musical exhibitions, but the Palace was constantly the scene of amateur concerts where Mr Saville and his widowed daughter were the chief performers. Ample rooms with formal eighteenth-century furniture; windows looking out on the tranquil English landscape; the old-fashioned instruments; an old man with powdered hair, slender and well-proportioned, singing with a sad young daughter airs from oratorios; a dignified, elderly hostess,—surely such conditions were remote enough from scandal. Hardly a cathedral Close would have looked askance at this friendship of forty

years' standing had it not been for Miss Seward's foible of exaggerating all her emotions. Her sensibilities must transcend those of other people, her enthusiasms be more eloquent, her sorrows more tragic than theirs. When Mr Saville died in 1803, not content with mourning her friend and daily companion deeply and sincerely, she must needs call all her numerous correspondents to witness her grief, begged each to "accept one farewell letter," and then to consider her "as free among the dead like unto them who . . . are out of remembrance and cut away from the earth." (A request which, as we have seen, Walter Scott was only too ready to obey.)

Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, not generally a sympathetic critic, said of Miss Seward's 'Letters' on their publication: "Her poetical flowers remind one of a *hortus siccus*—flat, dry, and bookish, . . . but still they are flowers."

The following extract still keeps the scent and freshness of a flower:—

"Several years past, after a drought which threatened to destroy the harvest, a plenteous yet soft shower descended. The evening was warm, and the clouds which had been gathering for many days of flattering gloom had not increased in their lower. The long-expected, long-desired rain dropped silently yet amply down. Mr Saville immediately stepped to the door and with clasped hands and moist uplifted eyes sung that superhuman strain—'He giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth water upon the fields'—set to music by the late Orpheus of the choirs, Dr Green. A strain of sweetness and devotion never exceeded gives ten-fold charm to that lovely acknowledgment. . . . We all caught his grateful piety, and shed those tears which to shed seems a foretaste of heaven."

Music, like gardening, was but a sympathetic interest to Miss Seward; her lifelong study was literature. She had read largely, remembered literally, and felt it in-

cumbent on her to form and express opinions on everything she read, and, as Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe says of her, "She has a great deal of sense *now and then*." If the poetry she quotes is often unfamiliar to us, it proves the wealth of our literature which allows successive generations to throw overboard the precious freights of their predecessors without diminishing the value of the cargo.

We are apt to think the end of the eighteenth century a barren time in poetry, but Miss Seward is never done extolling an age adorned by Mason, Churchill, Shenstone, Chatterton, Darwin, Hayley—and "Seward," she expected her correspondent to add in order to complete the list.

It was a proof of her vitality that she was eager to recognise and salute new poets. Southey she acclaimed with rapture. But when it came to poetry of startling form and unfamiliar content she has nothing to measure it with. She is an instance to prove that an exclusively literary training is the worst preparation for sound literary criticism. Neither knowledge of all literature nor the widest experience could, it is true, have prepared the reader for the weird beauty of the 'Ancient Mariner,' and if Miss Seward called it a "quiz of a poem," she had the taste to pick out the verse about the "leafy month of June." But no one who had ever gone out in singleness of heart to meet the spring could have made such dull and clumsy fun of Wordsworth and his "capering daffodils." If Miss Seward ever met the spring on the sunny slopes of Stow Hill, be sure it was in company with the vicar-choral, each of them well equipped with quotations from Thomson. In all literary epochs a certain proportion of cultivated people go to Nature to illustrate Art, not to Art to interpret Nature—as witness the reflective garden-literature of our own day.

With regard to primitive popular poetry, Miss Seward was completely at a loss. She had never listened to "knitters and spinners in the sun"; no nursery tale, no



stirring ballad, had haunted her childhood and lingered in her ear. It is a severe criticism on Scott's early ballads, "Glenfinlas" and the "Eve of St John," that Miss Seward hailed them with rapture, while she dismissed with contempt genuine old ballads dear to Scott as Bible words. It is diverting to imagine Scott reading aloud to Leyden these criticisms on the first volumes of the 'Minstrelsy': "The old Border ballads are so far interesting as they corroborate your essays; . . . poetically considered, surely little is their worth, and I must think it more to the credit of Mrs Brown's memory than of her taste that she should take pains to commit to memory such a quantity of uncouth rhymes totally destitute of all that gives metre a right to the name of poetry." Scott's own notes she describes as "elegant prose raiment hung upon old wooden posts of verse."

And how came Mr Walter Scott, advocate, to be in correspondence with Miss Seward, the Swan of Lichfield? The links are probably these. Miss Seward frequented the Spa at Buxton, in search of health and conversation. There, in 1793, she met Sir John<sup>1</sup> and Lady Clerk of Penicuik, an accomplished couple whose apartments "attracted the ingenious and polite of both sexes." A neighbour of the Clerks was Colin Mackenzie of Portmore, who probably owed to them his introduction to Miss Seward. When Scott produced his first poems, his translations from Bürger, Colin Mackenzie, generously eager to spread his friend's fame, and perhaps a little proud of his acquaintance with a "literary luminary"—to use a phrase of her own—of Miss Seward's standing, sent her the translations and the ballad of "Glenfinlas." Her reception of them was so flattering that in 1802 Scott sent her the two volumes of the 'Minstrelsy.'

It is to the credit of Miss Seward's sagacity that she recognised in Scott the coming poet, though the

<sup>1</sup> Nephew of John Clerk of Eldin.



expression of her intuition hardly does credit to her sense.

Here, she felt instinctively, late in the day the chance of her life had come to her. Her ambition had been to go down to posterity as the valued, sympathetic correspondent of the first genius of her time. Dr Johnson had given her no encouragement to link her fame with his; with Dr Darwin, so long a neighbour, she had exchanged no letters; Hayley indeed had at one time seemed to realise her fondest dream of fame, and the traffic in compliments and eulogies was carried on briskly between them. But after "the transcendent bard of the era" had placed her portrait between busts of Pope and Newton, and sent her some glowing verses on the occasion, he probably felt that he had no shot left in his locker, the correspondence languished on his part, and after some tender reproaches to "the beloved bard" was given up on hers.

That Miss Seward had never seen the young Scottish poet on whom she bestowed her sheets of letter-paper was no restraint on her eloquence. On the contrary, her correspondence, not her correspondent, was always her object in writing. With personal acquaintance might have come damping misgivings as to how enthusiastic expressions and unfettered flatteries might be received.

Before Constable published, in accordance with her bequest, the six volumes of Miss Seward's 'Letters' Scott had gone over them with a pencil erasing the most flagrant of her flatteries. Perhaps he thought that no one would understand it when he left such passages as this outburst on his "Cadyow Castle": "You Salvator! You Claude! What a night scene! . . . Your bull!—What a sublime creature! . . . Oh the soft, sweet picture of Margaret!—It rivals the Alcmena of Pindar in his first Nemean Ode!"

There is always an uncomfortable suspicion that Miss Seward meant to open up an exchange of compliment.

Scott's answers to her letters are wholly admirable. He pays the large, sweeping compliments—comparable to the bow or flourish of an earlier age—that fill a page and make no demand on the conscience. In spite of Miss Seward's hint that the "egotism of elevated minds is interesting," he keeps on a cheerful level of fact, now describing his visit to Oxford, now writing a dissertation on the Ossianic question, everywhere avoiding personal revelations.

In 1807, on his way from London, he turned aside to Lichfield to make the acquaintance of his correspondent, probably not without misgiving. However, when he saw her she interested him very much.

Miss Seward records with pardonable vanity that Scott, the most distinguished—*she* would have said "transcendent"—poet of his day, "had diverged many miles . . . to visit me ere he repassed the Tweed. Such visits are the most high-prized honours that my writings have procured for me." She was in a flutter of hospitality, made him read aloud his own poetry—and quite certainly gave him a *quid pro quo*,—insisted on his giving her the "pressed day," sent out hurriedly for canons and kinsfolk to sup and breakfast with him, and finally displayed a talent one would not have suspected her of possessing, that of telling a really creepy ghost story. This Scott afterwards worked up into "The Tapestryed Chamber."

Into the Episcopal Palace and the atmosphere of pedantry and preciosity Walter Scott brought the same willingness to please and to be pleased that made him the easiest of guests in Border cottage or baronial castle. With real warmth of feeling, if with less than her usual attention to grammar, Miss Seward wrote to him:—

"If I live I shall hope to see you again my guest, and for a longer period than that of your first and dearly welcome visit, with all that kindness of heart and hilarity of spirit which are so much your own, and which act upon our feelings like a May-day sun. Adieu!"

JOANNA BAILLIE.

THERE is an aspect of the world known to all of us, yet so unreal, so trivial, so cut off from normal appearances, that one hardly stops to take it into account. It is the appearance of the darkening landscape seen from railway or carriage window when reflections on the glass from the interior mingle with, or rather confuse and disguise, the grey stretches and black patches of the outside world. The mind of the traveller, cut off for the moment from activity, suspends consecutive thought, and eye and fancy wander idly over the unreal landscape. In a descriptive poem called "The Traveller by Night in November," Joanna Baillie has described with the minuteness of personal experience just how such a dimly apprehended world appears to the comfortably vacant mind of the traveller who—

"In snug chaise at close of night  
Begins his journey in the dark.

With dull November's starless sky  
O'erhead, his fancy soars not high.  
The carriage-lamps a white light throw  
Along the road, and strangely show  
Familiar things that cheat the eye.

Night softly dons her cloak and vizard,  
His eyes at every corner greeting  
With some new slight of dexterous cheating ;  
The road that in fair honest day  
Through pasture land and cornfield lay,  
Seems now to wind through tangled wood.

Yea ! roofless barns and ruined walls,  
As passing light upon them falls,  
When favoured by surrounding glooms,  
The castle's stately form assumes."

This picture is a curiously apt symbol of Joanna Baillie's genius. She, too, as far removed from the passions of market-place and camp and court as the traveller from the country he traverses in the dark, strained the eyes of her intelligence to discern the dim, romantic shapes of men and actions, the light from her limited experience and deep convictions adding to the romance but not to the reality of the world which she discovered, or rather created about her.

Lavater, when he saw the fine study that Sir Joshua had made of Miss Baillie's uncle, John Hunter, the famous physiologist, exclaimed: "Ah, the face of one who thinks for himself." Had he seen the portrait of the niece, the eager attenuated face, the sensitive mouth, the strong straight brows, he might have discovered that thinking for oneself was a family trait. A maiden lady of thirty years of age, sitting quietly at her seam beside her widowed mother in a back parlour of an old-fashioned London home, one hot summer afternoon, suddenly and silently resolves to write a series of dramas in which the great Passions, one by one, are to be portrayed as the fashioners of human destiny. In the gently audacious preface that accompanied her first three plays, Miss Baillie claimed for them that they were "part of an extensive design—one which, as far as my information goes, has nothing in any language similar to it, and one which a whole lifetime will be limited enough to accomplish." Even to have conceived such a design shows a mind at once of high flight and of pathetic simplicity. Of the world she knew little—as little of the world behind the footlights as of the larger world which it is supposed to portray. Yet men and women cut off from what is conventionally called the world have often had the

deepest and most original knowledge of life. Without crossing the threshold of Haworth parsonage the Brontë girls had met life in its most tragic guise—a young gifted soul brought to confusion by its own passions. They could handle the terrible aspects of life with the firm touch of familiarity. The high purpose, fine intelligence, and good breeding that distinguished Joanna Baillie's relations on both sides helped to make her the high-principled, original, delightful gentlewoman she was, but they fatally shielded the artist from all contact with the real fruit of the Passions, conflict and shame and confusion and broken hearts. For that reason Joanna at her seam, or in the night watches by her mother's sick-bed, revolving romantic plots and composing noble speeches in lucid diction, is a more pathetic, nay, a more heroic figure than any of the magnanimous warriors and ladies that she strives to portray. Had she been born into another rank of life she might, "a randy quean," have joined a troop of strolling players and known the smell of the footlights, and enjoyed that familiarity with the business of the stage for which she never ceased to hanker. It is pleasant to find her, an established maiden-lady, in 1802 writing to Miss Berry from Hampstead: "We have got a company of strollers at present who act in the Flask Tavern, and even after them I have a very great hankering, but how to get this gratified with all due regard to propriety, having neither man nor woman that will go with me, I have not wit enough to devise." When she was quite an old lady she rejoiced that she could still heartily enjoy a farce or a pantomime.

Miss Baillie based her art on the assumption that "sympathetic curiosity" is the strongest of human instincts, and that "the observation of our fellow-creatures under emotions of fear, anger, envy, hate, or love is the most absorbing of studies." Had she come into touch with the raw materials of life, one wonders if she might not have anticipated the realistic drama. One aspect of



life attracted her imagination powerfully—all that belongs, namely, to the darker side of superstition, terror and the fascination of terror, witchcraft and the self-deception that makes witchcraft human and tragic. In her young days she had had the good fortune to live among country people steeped to the lips in superstition. Once, as a girl, she asked the sexton of her father's parish if he had ever seen a ghost. "No," answered he, seriously, "I never have myself, but I am quite sure that my dog has."

In her own day Joanna Baillie was held to be a master in handling the mysterious and supernatural. It is, for the most part, only with his contemporaries that it is given to an author to touch that spot in the brain which sends a shiver along the nerves. Another generation may wonder that the meagre phrases of Maeterlinck could convey the chill of death, the horror of nightmare to our souls, just as we wonder how Scott, the author of "*Wandering Willie's Tale*," could find the terror of the supernatural in the German castle and wild huntsmen of Miss Baillie's '*Orra*.'

All works of imagination are the joint creation of the author and the reader, but especially in passages of sentiment and terror the whole effect depends on the responsive emotions and nerves of him who hears or reads. Because our emotions and nerves no longer respond to the superstitious half-beliefs of our grandparents, Joanna Baillie's works have lost a large element of their interest. The often-quoted passage from Scott, describing the silent hour of high noon among the mountains as being as full of vague fear as midnight itself, is from a letter to Joanna Baillie in which he anticipates the delight of reading her new volume of plays on the top of Minchmuir in the hush of a midsummer noon.

In the striking letter that Joanna wrote to Scott about the '*Bride of Lammermoor*,' she points the road her genius would fain have followed—and which others have

followed since,—that of morbid psychology. “Before Mr Cleishbotham gives up writing tales . . . I would have him give us a tale to be called ‘The Witch.’ . . . I can imagine a malevolent mind in those days by degrees actually believing that it acted by power from the devil, and to trace those steps would be very curious and subtle, and give much insight into human nature.” Having failed to persuade Scott to adopt a subject alien to his genius, Joanna Baillie herself tried to give life to her own imaginative idea. In her play, “Witchcraft,” there are striking figures, such as the sick girl peaking and pining under the belief in malign influences, and the idiot child who accompanies his witch mother to the heath in the vain hope of something to eat. But Joanna has no magic words to chill one’s blood. Moreover, her conscientious rationality does not give the Devil a fair chance.

In the same way many of her plays are imaginatively conceived, and one can see how in her brooding, shaping fancy they were warm with life, but the breath that should have quickened them into speech and action was simply not there—at least, so it seems to us. But Scott was not the only one among her contemporaries who hailed a new literary force in Joanna Baillie: Sir George Beaumont, that fastidious connoisseur of all the arts, declared that he had hardly dared to hope that such strains could be heard at the end of the eighteenth century, and Fox wrote five pages of eulogy in reply to Sir George’s recommendation of the plays. When Scott’s own poetic fame was at its height he repudiated any comparison between his own genius or Campbell’s and that of Burns, and added: “No; if you wish to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius of our country.” On Sunday evenings, when he and Erskine and other friends read poetry aloud, two books he would not give out of his own hands, Shakespeare and Joanna Baillie!

Though Scott was punctilious in treating Joanna Baillie as a sister of the craft, bowing to her judgment and submitting to her the proofs of 'The Lady of the Lake,' yet both were so free from preoccupation with their own literature that any one interested in the friendship between them is under no obligation to study Joanna's plays. He will do more wisely to make acquaintance with Joanna herself, and especially to study something of the remarkable family history in which she takes her place as only one of several distinguished figures.

In the eighteenth century more than in the nineteenth the Scottish Church was manned with men of gentle breeding, often offshoots of families of distinction: such was the father of Scott's son-in-law, the Rev. Dr Lockhart, who counted kin with the Lockharts of Carnwath; such was Dr Baillie, successively minister of Shotts and of Bothwell, and Professor of Divinity in Glasgow, who taught his children to be proud of their connection with the Covenanting Baillies of Jerviswood. But it was from the mother's side of the house, from the Hunters of Hunterston, that their originality came to the Baillie children.

Scotland in the centuries of her poverty—partly by reason of her poverty—bestowed good gifts on the world, gallant soldiers on France, solid traders on Dantzic and Holland, capable servants on the East India Company. The best of her gifts she kept for her rival across the Border; the eighteenth century saw the first of that succession of shrewd, skilful Scottish doctors who have simply marched up to London and taken possession of the field. How largely medical practice in England was in the hands of Scottish doctors in the middle of the eighteenth century may be gathered from Dr William Hunter's favourite toast: "May no English nobleman venture out of the world without a Scottish doctor, as I am sure there are none who venture in."

This Dr William, Mrs Baillie's eldest brother, was physician to Queen Charlotte from the early days of her married life. Notwithstanding his close connection with the Hanoverian Court, he kept a Scottish heart for such Jacobite ladies as had slipped over from France on business and had come to consult him. When in 1762 the wife of the younger Laird of Gask travelled down to Scotland that her baby might be born in his father's country, the rich, kind-hearted doctor not only took the liberty of prescribing and providing a post-chaise for the journey, but gave Mrs Oliphant this princely open letter to any doctor whose professional services she might require: "To his friends of the profession Dr Hunter presents his best compliments, and takes the liberty of asking the favour of any of them that may have occasion that they will be pleased to transfer any friendship they have for him to this lady, Mrs Oliphant, if she have any occasion to trouble them, and he will ever retain a grateful sense of obligation."

This note has been heedfully and gratefully treasured up at Gask, but so careful were all the Hunters to do good by stealth that one fears there is no possibility of Joanna's having told this delightful incident to Walter Scott. That Dr William Hunter indulged in the doctor's peculiar luxury of giving his services for nothing is proved by a hasty note from his brother John introducing a patient: "I don't know his case. He has no money, and you need none, so you are well met." Yet Dr William had all a Scotsman's pleasure in making the money he was so generous in disbursing. On his deathbed, after explaining to Dr Matthew Baillie that he was leaving him his Ayrshire property, the use of his museum and lecture theatre, he added that he had not left him his money, as he would not willingly deprive his nephew of the pleasure he himself had had in making his own fortune. Joanna Baillie was also a Scotswoman in the shy but firm de-



termination to make a decent bargain with her publishers. "I am not avaricious," she writes, "but I should not be satisfied with myself if I allowed, for want of a little firmness or exertion, the chief profits of my labour to be filched from me." When Cadell and Davies gave three hundred pounds for the second volume of the 'Plays' she was puzzled as how to dispose of "this immense sum." She finally gave most of it in charity.

Dr William Hunter's inheritance was the touchstone of the Baillie indifference to wealth. Dr William and his more famous brother John had quarrelled, and the elder brother left the family estate, Long Calderwood, to his nephew, Matthew Baillie. He was a young man with his way to make, his uncle, John Hunter, had a son alive, so that for Dr Baillie to waive his claim was to renounce it altogether, but he surrendered the estate unconditionally to his kinsmen.<sup>1</sup> If one were to object to Miss Baillie the automatic magnanimity of her virtuous characters, she might fairly retort that she was only drawing from life.

On the death of Dr William Hunter in 1783, Mrs Baillie, a widow, and her two daughters, Agnes and Joanna, joined their brother in London. Dr Baillie was soon caught up into the current of an active and successful professional life, but for the ladies—young women between twenty and thirty—life in Windmill Street in the centre of the foreign city of London was much more uniform than in friendly, familiar Glasgow. John Hunter was then at the height of his fame as the most famous physiologist of his time, but he lived chiefly in his laboratories and professional engagements. His wife was a woman of varied accomplishments who aspired to hold a salon in the musical and artistic world. Her social gatherings were liable to sudden panics and dispersions when Dr Hunter swept in unexpectedly at

<sup>1</sup> On the death of this cousin without heirs the estate returned to the Baillies.



midnight from his laboratory and stormily wished the company good-night. Mrs Hunter's matrimonial difficulties and social triumphs are alike swallowed in oblivion, but something of her charm remains in her graceful song, "My Mother bids me bind my Hair."

In 1790 Joanna brought out a slim volume of poems which fell unnoticed from the press. Between Glasgow and London she and her mother and sister had spent three years at Long Calderwood in Ayrshire. From that quiet time in the country we have the songs that bid fair to outlive the plays in the memory of Joanna's countrymen: "Woo'd an' Married an' a'," and "The Weary Pund o' Tow."

Born of the manse and living quietly in a small laird's house, the ladies probably knew all the gossip of the country-side. A generation later Evangelicalism, turning the more seriously disposed women of the upper classes into missionaries, opened a new gulf between them and their poorer neighbours; but in the eighteenth century Lady Anne Lindsay, Miss Caroline Oliphant (Lady Nairne), and Miss Joanna Baillie were frankly interested in Jeanie and Jamie, their courting and "fleeching" and "flyting." Joanna never got to the heart of the peasant life about her as these other rarer singers did. Her pictures of Scottish interiors have something of the quality of her friend Wilkie's, kindly and humorous, but seen from without.

Even if she could have written, like her countrywomen, one or two imperishable songs, that would not have satisfied Joanna's ambition, shyly but tenaciously fixed on the drama,—not merely on poetic drama to be read in the closet, but on drama to be applauded and wept over by the crowd. Even at school in Glasgow Joanna had invented plays for her schoolfellows to act, she herself taking the heroic parts. Details of costume and decoration were her delight. Long afterwards, when going to stay with Miss Berry for Mrs Damer's private

theatricals at Strawberry Hill, Miss Baillie, though she consented to write the epilogue, pleaded that pulling the curtain and nailing up the scenery were more to her taste.

The extraordinary recognition that her first plays (1798) met with among the accepted arbiters of taste, such as Fox and Sir George Beaumont, procured for Joanna the friendship of Mary Berry. Miss Berry had been enthusiastic for the plays a year before they took the town. This, she felt, gave her a kind of ownership in the dramatist who still refused to be known. As soon as her identity was known Miss Berry descended on her and took possession, moved alike by admiration for her genius and by the delight of discovering and protecting a new author. With all her modesty and shyness Joanna would not put up with patronage or caprice. Miss Berry neglected a promise to visit her, and then wrote a careless letter of unreal excuse; Joanna's resentment read her a wholesome lesson: "If anything in the simplicity of my appearance has led you to suppose me of an easier and gentler temper than I am, I am sorry for the involuntary deceit." Another time she frankly told Miss Berry that her "tardiness in calling on my good sister-in-law, Mrs Matthew Baillie, sticks in my stomach." Joanna's plain speaking to Mary Berry was spirited and necessary, but plain-speaking among friends is a dangerous precedent. Miss Berry genuinely admired Joanna's genius and appreciated her upright original character, but with the blunted perception of a woman of the world she could not be content to love excellence till it had the hall-mark of social success. Miss Baillie had stayed with her at Little Strawberry, and in her quiet way had enjoyed the society that the gifted Mrs Damer gathered round her at Strawberry Hill. She had been unconscious of herself making any impression. It was a painful surprise to learn from the officious Miss Berry that she had been found unpleasantly reserved, and especially

that Mrs Damer could not get on with her. Miss Berry had Joanna's confidence by this time. It is touching to find so proud a woman meekly allowing herself to be schooled. "Pray ask Mrs Damer whether she cannot, in exchange for a great deal of esteem and of unfeigned liking, bestow some portion of her regard on me." With humour, but humour touched with wistfulness, she adds: "As doing something towards softening the sternness of my nature, or rather this quiet and steady melancholy which has for a long time hung over me, I have this very night put strings on an old guitar. . . . I don't know whether the old Scotch airs of my youth or any exertion I can make will do any good to this bad nature of mine; they will show at least, that I am not stubborn nor intractable." Posterity cannot but regret that it cannot tell both ladies—the one for her consolation, the other for her better instruction—that William Wordsworth said once to Crabb Robinson that if he wanted to give a foreigner an impression of a thoroughly well-bred Englishwoman he would introduce him to Joanna Baillie.

At the end of Miss Baillie's depressed little letter she breaks new ground. "I have begun my Drury Lane drama." This was "Constantine Palæologus," which, if not a very moving play in itself, was the cause of great suffering on the part of its author.

The theatre was always in the centre of her imagination. Unfitted as they are for the stage, all the plays were carefully planned by her for acting. One can imagine with what a glow of anticipated glory she made the description of the heroine of her second piece—Jane de Montfort—a careful and nobly-worded portrait of Mrs Siddons. She dreamed from the beginning of hearing her own words spoken in that deep, sweet, resonant voice. Sitting in the obscurity of the pit, under the kind care of her brother's brother-in-law, Dr Denman, a moment of soul-satisfying triumph was

hers when the Kembles produced "De Montfort" in 1803. Mrs Siddon's compliment, "Make me more Jane de Montforts," spoken in irresponsible graciousness, was the cause of a disappointment as bitter as the triumph had been sweet. Kemble, then manager of Drury Lane, had followed up the compliment with an invitation to Joanna to write him a play. The prospect put passion into her industry. For months she worked at "my Drury Lane play," with a vision of the brother and sister in the chief rôles. The fact of rejection was bitter as she relates it to Miss Berry: "I have to tell you that my Drury Lane play, as I used fondly to call it, has been returned into my hands with a short letter from Mr Kemble saying that he doubts the success of it, without entering into any particulars whatever." In misfortune Miss Baillie could retreat into the feminine fortress of household life. "This is the end of my labours for a time, and I enjoy the sewing of a plain seam by the fire very much." But the inward wound bled none the less for the gentlewomanly reserve that refused to discuss it. A year or two later she met Mrs Siddons at a ball in Edinburgh, and fancied that the Tragic Muse looked a little uncomfortable as they curtsied to one another.

This little embarrassment—if it ever existed anywhere except in Joanna's sensitiveness—was only temporary. Often in later years did Mrs Siddon's noble figure and stately diction add distinction and quaintness to the genial little parties at Hampstead, when the ladies entertained Rogers and Southey and Campbell and Crabb Robinson.

Miss Baillie's friends kept on placidly assuring her of immortality and the certain suffrages of posterity,—a meagre boon to one longing for the warm, human plaudits of pit and gallery.

Posterity does not read Miss Baillie's plays,—posterity smiles indulgently at Walter Scott's uncritical enthu-

siasm for them; but one cannot think without a softening of the heart of that amazing moment in Joanna's history (it was in 1808) when, reading 'Marmion' aloud, she lighted on the following verses, and would not let herself break down till she had read them to an end:—

“ . . . The wild harp, which silent hung  
By silver Avon's holy shore,  
Till twice an hundred years roll'd o'er;  
When she, the bold enchantress, came,  
With fearless hand and heart on flame!  
From the pale willows snatch'd the treasure,  
And swept it with a kindred measure,  
Till Avon's swans, while rung the grove  
With Montfort's hate and Basil's love,  
Awakening at the inspirèd strain,  
Deem'd their own Shakspeare lived again.”

The worst injustice women have to complain of is that their achievements are too much and too promptly acclaimed. This arises partly from the simplest of reasons—"the chivalry of man in lovely woman's cause," as Campbell gallantly phrases it; partly from Dr Johnson's cynical reason—"Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." The chief reason of the interest excited by the literary work of women is the world's unspoken hope that here at last it will find the feminine point of view—the last thing most women authors are prepared to give! Miss Austen, the perfect artist, is no more feminine in her point of view than Shakespeare is masculine. George Eliot is only feminine in her determination to ignore her sex; Charlotte Brontë does give the feminine point of view, but so that half the world of women repudiate it. In Joanna Baillie the seeker for the eternally feminine will find the point of view of the vestal virgin—lofty, consecrated, colourless!

'Marmion' was published in 1808. The year before, Miss Baillie, visiting Edinburgh, had made Scott's ac-



quaintance, and from thenceforth was placed among his dearest friends and constant correspondents. It is pleasant to find that of all his friends Joanna has said the kindest thing of Lady Scott. It was at a party where the Wordsworths, Crabb Robinson, the newly married Humphry Davy, and Miss Baillie were present. The Scotts were evidently under discussion, and Mrs Scott was referred to disparagingly. Then Miss Baillie, always prompt and loyal, despite her shyness, spoke up warmly: "When I visited her I saw a great deal to like. She seemed to admire and look up to her husband. She was very kind to her guests, her children were well-bred, and the house was in excellent order. And she had some smart roses in her cap, and I did not like her the less for that."

When Sophia accompanied her parents to London she was sent to stay with the ladies at Hampstead, and was cosseted and made much of, and doubtless sewed her seam by the fire and heard much entertaining talk from Mrs Joanna and from her sister Mrs Agnes Baillie.

Sophia had inherited all her father's sweetness of nature: his interests were her interests as far as her intelligence could reach them; his friendships were her friendships, accepted and cultivated with all her loyal heart. When she lay dying, Miss Baillie grieved for her as Lady Louisa Stewart also grieved. It was to Miss Baillie that kind Mrs Thomas Scott wrote this account of the meekness and sweetness of her last days: "I have known our dear Sophia since she was two months old, and thought myself aware of the sweet gentleness of her disposition; but to behold such patience, resignation, and gratitude for every service did astonish me. To you it would have recalled her beloved father. Her death seems to have extinguished the brightest spark he left behind him; she resembled him more than his other children."

In 1820 Scott had the satisfaction of personally super-

intending the bringing out of Joanna's "Family Legend" on the Edinburgh stage, with the proper tartans assigned to each clan, and with armour suited to the period,—a task after his own heart.

Scott had always loved the theatre and the company of players. One of his earliest recollections went back to his sixth year, when with dumb rage he saw the elders of the family going off to the theatre, and heard his mother say, "Walter is too young to understand the great Mr Garrick." In mature life Kemble was the only friend who ever tempted him to deeper conviviality. Terry was among his intimates; Charles Mathews one whose society afforded him delight. Mrs Henry Siddons was a special favourite of Scott's. She and her husband were managers of the Theatre Royal in Edinburgh, and it was a double pleasure to Scott that they should bring out Miss Baillie's Scottish play on the Scottish stage. Scott's detailed and anxiously sympathetic letters to Joanna occupy almost a whole chapter of Lockhart.

Only once in their long intimacy was there a serious divergence of opinion between these two trusty friends, and on this occasion Joanna did not fail to speak her mind with her usual plainness. She had known Lady Byron as Miss Milbanke, was sincerely attached to her, and, when the breach took place, espoused her cause with the headlong chivalry of a maiden lady. In January 1817 appeared Scott's generous, well-weighed review of "Childe Harold" in 'The Quarterly.'<sup>1</sup> Nothing he ever wrote cost Scott more anxious thought. He desired to conciliate without flattering Lord Byron, to point the road to amendment without reproaching him for his conduct, to make allowance for his circumstances without blaming other people for those circumstances. (Byron was specially grateful for the consideration shown for "the feelings of others.") That Lady Byron should be equally satisfied was impossible. She recognised the

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, "Lord Byron," p. 411.

generosity of Scott's motives, but feared that the article would be used against her. As for Joanna Baillie, she was equally distressed for Lady Byron's feelings and for the injury she feared Scott was doing to his own fair fame.

"Oh, why have you endeavoured to reconcile the world to this unhappy man at the expense of being yourself considered as regarding want of all principle and the vilest corruption with an indulgent eye? Indeed my good, my kind, my unwearied friend, this goes to my heart. I truly believe that you have done it to cheer in some degree the despair of a perishing mind and rouse it to make some effort to save itself; but this will not be. You cannot save him, . . . and you may depress a most worthy character who has been already so sinned against, and who bears the deepest part of her distress in silence."

Such a plea coming from a friend he so highly regarded distressed and perplexed Scott. Miss Baillie's second letter reiterating the charge reached him when he was recovering from his first serious attack (March 1817). However clear a man's conscience, and however decided his view on any matter, in sickness his own mind will turn traitor and torment when it should approve.

It was a real relief to Scott to be able to assure Miss Baillie that Morritt—a great friend of Lady Byron—had written: "People here swear that you wrote the review of Lord Byron in 'The Quarterly.' You get great credit by it: I hope it is true." "Now," adds Scott, "Morritt, who is 'Downright Dunstable,' would not have let this sentence slip him if he could have dreamed of the review injuring Lady Byron. So I am much cheered about this cursed blunder."

Whose was the blunder, one wonders? Not Scott's.

Joanna Baillie's life at Hampstead flowed on as evenly, and apparently as contentedly, as that of any other sensible, well-conditioned maiden-lady, but beneath that dignified, cheerful demeanour, the "heart on flame" had still its old longing, modest but passionate, for recognition.

In 1837 her collected plays and poems had been kindly received, and she writes in reply to Lady Dacre's congratulations: "What do you take me for? Do you think it is possible for me to hear of my kind and generous friends rejoicing in the success of my dramas, and not partake of their feelings? Let those who have always been successful be callous to general approbation, I cannot be so philosophical, therefore I say that I am very proud and very triumphant. I am *praised*. This is a great thing in the estimation of the soundest mind."

Perhaps Joanna's best chance of immortality lies in a page of the 'Bride of Lammermoor,' where a quotation from "our immortal Joanna Baillie" is introduced into the text. Miss Baillie was not supposed to be in the secret of the authorship of the Waverley Novels; she wrote to Scott: "I don't pretend to dive into mysteries, but I am sure that Walter Scott wrote the passage I allude to, though the Grand Cham of Tartary should have written all the rest; for there is nobody but him [*sic*] that takes any pleasure in praising me. I am, as we say in Clydesdale, very 'vogie' of it, though I try to behave myself as modestly as may be."

VIII.

J. B. S. MORRITT OF ROKEY





## J. B. S. MORRITT OF ROKEBY.

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IN the north-east angle of the island of Crete, on the south wall of a small outlying chapel of the Holy Cross, is inscribed the name J. B. S. Morritt, with the date 1795.

We no longer snatch a spurious immortality by carving our transitory names on the enduring rock; yet the "Isles of Greece" may plead for Byron's name cut on the rock of Sunium, and if one stone accuses Morritt, another, built into the wall of the adjacent monastery, extenuates the fact. It contains an important Greek inscription dating from (*circa*) 130 B.C. The Prior tells the curious traveller that the inscribed stone was once used as a paving-stone in the big church, but that the English "Lordos" whose name was cut on the wall of the church had induced the monks to give it more honourable treatment.

In 1795 the troubles in France were cutting off access from the Continent, and probably Greece was on the whole more accessible than Italy to young Englishmen making the grand tour. Among them there was no young "Lordos" more nobly endowed than young Morritt of Rokeby. He had the fine physique, handsome face, and spirited bearing of a well-bred young Englishman of the time. He was only twenty-three, but had for four years been master of one of the most beautiful and romantic properties in the north of England, and of wealth

sufficient to put travel, the acquisition of Art treasures, and acts of impulsive generosity all within his reach. He had brought from the university that living and intimate scholarship which makes classical writers a man's pocket-companions through life. And, as if all this were not enough, Nature, seconding Fortune, had allied in his character honesty that gave him among his friends the nickname of "Downright Dunstable" with a sweetness of temper that made truth-telling a grace as well as a principle. Whenever Morritt is mentioned by a contemporary a tribute is sure to follow to his unselfishness, his sympathy, his cheerfulness. Finally Opportunity supplemented Nature and Fortune by giving him a part in one of the most valuable and romantic of the intellectual movements of his time.

Most of the movements and ideas—spiritual, political, intellectual, and romantic—which have been the life of the nineteenth century were already in germ in the last decades of the eighteenth. Some of these luxuriant growths have had their bloom and passed away, but others are only reaching their full development in our own time. Classical archæology is in our day a neo-Renaissance, laboriously but triumphantly spelling out the life of heroic ages from vases, sculptures, gems, and the foundations of long-perished cities: a hundred years ago it was a dilettanteism concerned with the acquisition of artistic treasures, the limning of classical buildings by foreign artists for munificent patrons, the publication of expensive volumes of travel by wealthy connoisseurs.

Every year is adding to the fascination of archæological investigation; facts cut in stone or stamped in metal attest the realism of Homeric description; civilisations undreamt of a generation ago lie patent in their strange familiar detail. Our harvest being so infinitely richer than the first investigators could have conceived, it is consoling to remember that *they* must have had moments of surprised attention and breathless discovery that a



J. B. S. MORRILL OF ROKEBY.





later age, going out to seek definite objects, can never recapture.

A group of pillars, standing clear against the sky, a burial-mound on a solitary coast, grey fragments of building on a hillside overhanging a later village on the plain,—these the traveller might meet with on his day's ride, these he must identify by the aid of Strabo or Pausanias, with what added light names more or less corrupted might afford.

The finest surprise of all was to find the old Homeric life lingering in strongholds hid in rocky peninsulas, or in valleys isolated in high mountain-ranges. Sir William Gell describes the classic traveller finding "the simplicity of the heroic ages in the mountains of Arcadia, where a single brass kettle is frequently the only utensil in a family." In piquant contrast to these remains of the older, nobler civilisation, the traveller "descending in the course of one hour into the plain may, drinking coffee in a cup set with rubies, realise the splendid visions of the 'Arabian Nights.'" In Phocis a shepherd boy "herborising" with Dr Sibthorpe, in naming plants and rehearsing their virtues, used the nomenclature of Theophrastus and Dioscorides.

In the fine Palladian house at Rokeby which the Morritts had acquired from their predecessor, "long Sir Thomas Robinson,"—famous in his day as an amateur architect and splendid prodigal,<sup>1</sup>—was a collection of classic sculptures, inscriptions, altars, &c., also of Sir Thomas's providing. This may have given Mr Morritt his first impulse towards collecting Art treasures. When at Athens in 1795, he had tried to buy a portion of the frieze of the Parthenon which, though not fallen, was hanging insecurely in its place. Not the virtue of the venal Turk but the jealousy of the French consul who had his eye on the same piece prevented the conclusion of the bargain. Mr Morritt's quick sympathies discovered

<sup>1</sup> See Walpole's Letters, vol. i. p. 111.

on this occasion the repugnance with which the Greeks impotently watched the removal of their ancient glories.

It was not primarily to acquire treasures but rather to gain knowledge and to follow adventure that Mr Morritt had come to Greece and Asia Minor. Writing in 1828, Scott gives a humorous account of a dinner at Sotheby's where Coleridge, "after eating a hearty dinner," held the table with a disquisition upon Homer, whose identity he placidly broke up on the Wolfian scheme. "Morritt, a zealous worshipper of the old bard, was incensed at a system which would turn him into a polytheist, gave battle with keenness, and was joined by Sotheby. Mr Coleridge behaved with the utmost complaisance, but relaxed not from his contention. . . . Morritt's exertions must have cost him an extra sixpence worth of snuff."

It was part of Morritt's business in life to vindicate Homer, now against those who denied his identity, now against those who impugned his veracity.

Shortly after his return from the Mediterranean in 1797, one Bryant did material service to archæology by calling in question the very existence of the city of Troy. In a noble quarto, with panoramic views in sepia, Morritt vindicated the historical accuracy of his favourite poet. It had been with no eye to controversy, but simply "to gratify a classical curiosity with regard to Homer," that for a couple of days in November 1795 he and a friend had made a survey of the plain of Troy, identifying as they might, and with minute reference to the text, the station where Greek tents and ships had lain side by side; the site of windy Ilium and of the Skaian Gate, the hot and cold springs at the sources of the Scamander—these they tested with their hands,—and the devious courses of the two rivers, difficult to trace at that time, swollen as they were with November rain. Every point was made out with a carefulness and stated with a per-

suasiveness that would still be convincing if actual Troy had not been discovered on the site where Mr Morritt explained to Dr Clarke that it could not possibly be!

Scott said once of himself—"I am far from undervaluing any branch of scholarship, because I have not the good fortune to possess it." He always regretted his neglect of Greek; and one may be certain that he listened with pleasure when Morritt described the plain of Troy and illustrated his remarks with little sketches, but he probably enjoyed it more when Morritt told the tale of his adventures in the Peninsula of the Maina in the Morea. The story, as we have it extracted from Morritt's journal for the year 1795, reads like a situation invented by Lord Byron and narrated by the author of 'Waverley.'

Maina was in those days a totally unknown region. From the Messenian plain a range of rocky mountains runs down in a narrow peninsula to Cape Tænarum. Meagre strips of soil skirting bay and inlet, or fertile hollows and terraces on the heights, barely rewarded the toil of the peasants—or rather of their wives, for, as with all warlike barbarians, the labours of the field were left to the women. But the land which could scarcely afford her children a livelihood, absolutely guaranteed their independence, and the Mainiotes loved their barren land with a fierce passion unknown to dwellers in fairer regions.

But since men cannot live on liberty and lupins (the chief harvest on the fertile patches), the inhabitants pursued the trade of piracy. From hidden bays long boats, manned by armed oarsmen, would dart out on trading vessels, plunder them, sink them, and either leave the crew to perish or carry them off as slaves. Lord Byron on his second visit to Colonna had a narrow escape from a party of Mainiotes concealed in a neighbouring cavern. When not engaged on such piratical

excursions, the men of Maina went constantly armed with excellent rifles; the matrons and girls on high-days and holidays practised with slings and pistols.

This untamable race claimed descent from the ancient Laconians, and had been invested with such a glamour of fierce romance all round the Mediterranean that Buona-parte was fired with the desire of claiming a genealogical descent from them. He actually at one time sent two trusty personages who went, or pretended to go, to Maina to confer with the inhabitants.

Mr Morritt and his companions were the first Englishmen to visit this country where nothing, they were assured by Turkish officials and Greek merchants, awaited them but robbery and captivity. The travellers were ardent and generous young men, evidently under the influence of ideas that Rousseau had made fashionable, and prepared to find "all the romantic virtues among a people who still maintained its independence when all others were in subjection." And they certainly found what they went to seek. The Mainiote chiefs received the strangers with stately hospitality, and sent them on to the next stronghold with an armed guard.

One suspects that Mr Morritt saw everything *en beau*. "Their freedom," he writes, ". . . produced the effects of freedom; they were active, industrious, intelligent. . . . They possessed the lofty mind and attachment to their country which everywhere distinguishes the inhabitants of free and mountainous districts, whether in Britain, Switzerland, or Greece. Their hostility," he adds, "is treacherous and cruel, but their friendship is inviolable."

Was it from a modest reluctance to proclaim his own generosity or from unwillingness to rouse prejudice against his new friends that he makes no mention of the wretched Dutch sailor whom he ransomed out of hopeless slavery?

Morritt's description of the stronghold of Kitreis is as



romantic as the opening chapter of a Waverley novel: "The house consisted of two towers of stone exactly resembling our own old towers upon the borders of Scotland and England, with arched and embattled gateway leading into an enclosed court." Around this stronghold clustered the houses of retainers; above it rose rocky hillsides where on a hundred little platforms and terraces were planted corn, maize, olives, and mulberry-trees; below it was the little dark bay in which vessels lay at anchor. The host, a venerable figure, received the travellers with dignified kindness, but the hereditary head of the house was his niece, the Capitanea, who received them in state in a costume such as one supposed was only worn by Byron's heroines.

Every day's ride brought new and picturesque experiences. Built into mean walls of Christian chapels they would come across Ionian pillars; a square Venetian tower frowned unexpectedly across a ravine; on a low island in a bay were remains of some shrine of immemorial worship of the powers of the sea. The travellers conversed with pirate hosts who freely censured the corruptions of civilisation; they joined in the dances and gymnastics on the green in honour of Easter Sunday. It was only after they had left the country of the Mainiotes, and were travelling up the comparatively law-ridden valley of the Eurotas, that they began to have the uncomfortable consciousness that their guides were in collusion with the inhabitants, and that every village might prove a prison.

The customary illustrated quarto which wealthy travellers were expected to publish on their return from the East, took, as we have seen in Morritt's case, the form of an examination of the Plain of Troy. An accomplished university man, he had the not uncommon faculty of writing verse in the varying styles that in turn were in vogue. He brought out an elegant little volume of translations from Musæus. The verse is an



echo of Gray; the chief charm of the book lies in the classical vignette by Harding. By-and-by, when in common with others of Scott's friends—Marriott and Stewart Rose—he turned his English lyre to a ballad measure, his achievement was neither better nor worse than theirs. The best piece of verse from his pen is the epitaph on Burgh, the friend of Mason, in York Minster. The occasion, the deliberate measure, gave scope to Morritt's finest qualities, his generous friendship, his serious and cheerful piety.

On his return from Greece fashionable and political life were open to him, and he frankly took his share of both. He became a member of the Dilettante Club, an exclusive society of wealthy connoisseurs; he was afterwards the founder of the Travellers' Club. His duties as a member of Parliament took him every year to London, but his life was centred at Rokeby and on the duties of a country gentleman. In all these respects he conformed to what was expected of a wealthy well-bred Englishman of his time and class. But at heart Morritt remained the romantic idealist who had found nothing but barbaric virtues among Mainiote pirates.

Ever since the time of Rousseau and Thomas Day the "return to Nature," and to a frugal primitive manner of life, had appealed to the consciences of the wealthy and imaginative as hopeful principles of education. In 1802 had appeared Mrs Grant of Laggan's 'Letters from the Mountains,' breathing the teaching of Rousseau to the music of Ossian. Mr Morritt paid the authoress the extraordinary compliment of asking her to undertake the education of his nephew, the child of his affection and heir of his estates. In 1807 he asked her to come to Rokeby to discuss educational ideas. From Mrs Grant's eloquent pen we need look for no genial, gossiping account of the life at Rokeby. Contact with ceremony and luxury, instead of suggesting a piquant contrast with the

simplicity of her own life, drove the Highland woman in her to contemptuous ignoring, and the sentimental philosopher in her to reflections on the virtue of the Spartans! It took a good deal to overcome Mrs Grant's prejudices against those brought up in "artificial refinement," but the goodness and simplicity of the Morritts were not to be resisted. "He is learned without the least pedantry, lively without frivolity, and has such frankness and simplicity of manner, and seems to have a temper so obliging and affectionate. . . . Mrs Morritt is little less intelligent than her husband, with the same kindness of heart and kindred virtues."

People of high and fixed principles labour under the disadvantage of having to account to themselves for virtues that grow freely in other men without the accredited props. Morritt's goodness was also a perplexity to Wilberforce when he met him at Lord Muncaster's in 1816: it was difficult for an earnest Low Churchman of that day to account for such evident fruits of the spirit in a branch not grafted into the Evangelical True Vine. Wilberforce notes in his diary: "Morritt very cheerful, unassuming, full of anecdote and a good deal of knowledge, literary, of the old-fashioned Church of England religion, and high-spirited as to integrity, generosity, gratitude, friendly attachment, most kind to his family and friends."

We have seen how an idle jest in the inn parlour at Lowood had brought Morritt acquainted with Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stewart. Thenceforward he was a frequent guest at Bothwell. Where Lady Douglas was hostess amusements were wittier and more imaginative than in other country houses. Mr Morritt contributed his ballad to the book of Bothwell MS., and Lady Louisa recalls evenings when he read Massinger's plays aloud. He and Lady Louisa became intimate friends and occasional correspondents. When Scott died they were, outside his own family, the two who

mourned him most. In her first letter to Mr Morritt after the death of their friend, Lady Louisa falls into a vein of pensive recollection: ". . . I shall always thank you for having prompted me to go up and meet him in London last year, and so catch the last faint rays of the setting sun. You, too, have something to thank me for. If I remember right, I may boast of being the means of your making each other's acquaintance. On your resolving on a tour in Scotland (1808) I told him you were coming, and I recollect the very window where he stood—in a spot I shall never visit again (Bothwell)—and the tone in which he said, 'Ah! Mr Morritt!—a very learned man! I shall be happy to know him.' But this calling back of other years is almost too much for either of us."

Scott's attitude towards classical learning is amusingly defined in a letter to his son Charles, written after the manner of good parents with an eye to edification: ". . . Though some people may have scrambled into distinction without it" (*i.e.*, a "perfect knowledge of the classical languages"), "it is always with the greatest difficulty, like climbing over a wall instead of giving your ticket at the door."

In the noble-looking English gentleman who in the summer of 1808 was Scott's guest at Ashestiel he found a scholar who carried his learning as light-heartedly as he himself carried his literary fame. Scott knew the quality of his guest when he took him to a "kirn" at his neighbour's, "Laird Nippy's," where Morritt danced with Border lassies as frankly as he had taken part in the stone-slinging and gymnastics of the Mainiote maidens.

From this period Morritt stands in the broad daylight of Scott's biography, a figure familiar and beloved to all readers of Lockhart. He and Scott touched at almost every point. They were both country gentlemen; poor-law administration and licensing bills came quite natur-

ally into their correspondence. Both had the passion for planting and improving land; in the first year of his tenure at Abbotsford, Scott sowed acorns from Rokeby to form a "Morritt Grove," and Morritt writes to Lady Louisa with amusement, "Scott is sowing his Scottish Eden with acorns, the happiest of men." Both were spirited Tories of the Pitt school; as they grew older one rather suspects that Scott was the more conservative of the two,—at least he was dismayed to find his friend in favour of Catholic Emancipation.

Morritt had both the antiquarian turn and the romantic instinct which were almost essential to the perfect enjoyment of Scott's companionship. On Scott's first visit to Rokeby, Morritt was amused to find that he expected a tradition for every half-mile of Brignal Banks and Greta Woods. These were not so plentiful as on the barer holms of Tweed and Yarrow. "Then we must invent them," said Scott; and so the poem of Rokeby came to be written.

There was actual history enough connected with the place. The century and a half of the Robinson tenure was typical of the history of many similar families. In the reign of James I. a prosperous London haberdasher and citizen had bought the estate, his son the Parliamentary colonel had added to it, three generations of squires possessed it, followed by the splendid prodigal who sold it in 1770. Nobler and far more interesting to Scott and Morritt was the history of the six earlier centuries, when the family of Rokeby held the lands of Morthaim, Brignal, and Rokeby, right in the pathway of the marauding Scot. The family history and misfortunes had so fascinated the antiquary, Surtees, that he used to declare that if he could find a poor lad of the name of Rokeby he would educate him at his own expense. Scott's poem, however, is a pure invention, and does not grow out of the heart

of the land as the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' grew out of the Border country.

We value it because we know why the description of Matilda is touched with emotion, and because we imagine that in the rival lovers, the poetic dreamer and the successful man of action, we have two sides of Scott's own character as a lover. Morritt naturally took the keenest interest in the progress of the poem. He counselled delay and a careful perfecting of the work; his name was to be linked with it, and he wished the honour to be perpetuated. He was the confidante of all Scott's literary undertakings. Constable and the Ballantynes were perforce in the secret of 'Waverley,' and Erskine, the Counsellor, had seen it at the earlier and later stages, but Morritt was the only other person to whom the book was sent without mystery. There was in Morritt's letter of thanks something more gratifying to Scott's heart than the warmest praise or most delicate criticism. Mrs Morritt—the one dear object of all her husband's thoughts—had been for some months sick with a mortal sickness. "Perhaps," he wrote, "I like what I have read even more than I should at any other time, because never came kindness so gratefully and opportunely. Mrs Morritt is really better than she has been for some time, . . . and the keenness of pleasure which your story has given her has communicated itself to me. . . . She has gone to bed with her head full of adventures, and I promised to express to you how much she enjoyed them." This was the first of many thousand sickbeds lightened and cheered by the Waverley novels. One remark of Morritt's throws a curious light on this and all subsequent novels. "How could you have hoped that I should not discover you? I had heard you tell half the anecdotes before—some turns you owe to myself; and no doubt most of your friends



must have the same sort of thing to say." It is pleasant to think how often we may be entertaining Sir Walter's friends unaware.

Except the Duke of Buccleuch, Morritt seems to have been the only one of Scott's friends whom he consulted about financial business.

To the children of the Scott family Rokeby was almost a second home. The first visit that Walter and Sophia ever paid was when, on their ponies, they accompanied their father to Rokeby, their mother following in a barouche; two years later, when young Walter, then a High School boy, heard suddenly that kind Mrs Morritt was ill he turned from white to red, and bursting into tears had to hide his distress by running from the room. When Anne and the Lockharts were travelling south [after Sir Walter's death,—their hearts stricken, their nerves still a-quiver from the strain of his illness,—they broke the journey at Rokeby. It is even more touching to hear that after Sophia Lockhart's death it was to Rokeby that Lockhart carried his children and his speechless grief.

Morritt had no children of his own, but a nephew and nieces were the object of his fatherly tenderness and more than fatherly solicitude. Lady Louisa, speaking about his anxiety for the health of these young people, says, "It wrings one's heart to see so good and unselfish a man constantly baffled and harassed in this manner." To these "elegant and deserving young women," as he calls them, Scott as an old man describes himself as paying the temperate homage that age pays to beautiful youth.

As the years went on Morritt seems to have withdrawn more and more into a home life made graceful and cheerful by these young people, while hard work, and latterly weakness, kept Scott equally tied at home at the distance of two days' journey.

Is there anywhere a gentler expression of old and

tried friendship than in the letter Morritt wrote to Scott on his retirement from the Court of Session in 1830?—"You think you will tire of solitude in these months, and, in spite of books and the love of them, I have discovered by experience the possibility of such a feeling; but can we not, in some degree, remedy this? Why should we be within two days' march of one another and not sometime together as of old? How I have enjoyed in your house the *summum bonum* of Sir W. Temple's philosophy,—something which is not home and yet with the liberty of home; which is not solitude and yet hath the ease of solitude, and which is only found in the house of an old friend. . . . Well, then, for auld lang syne will you not, now that the Session has no claim on you, combine our forces against the possibility of *ennui*? If you will do this I will positively hold myself in readiness to do as much by you in the next November and in every alternate November, nor shall the month ever pass without bringing us together. If I plead thus strongly it is because I feel the advantage to myself. Time has made gaps in the list of old friends; . . . young ones, though very cheering and useful, are not and cannot be the same."

Alas! the "next November" was to find Scott at sea on that sad hopeless quest of health and ease of mind: and the "alternate November" "where alone," as he said to Laidlaw, "rest was to be found for Sir Walter—in the grave."

One last visit he did pay to Rokeby. On his way south, after being ordered abroad, he broke the journey as usual at the house of his old friend. "It may be supposed," writes Lockhart, "that his parting with Mr Morritt was a grave one." It happened that Scott had left a ring at one of the inns on the road, —a ring he valued, for it had been found among the

ruins of Hermitage Castle. He begged his friend to make inquiry for it, and, if found, to wear it for him till he should reclaim it.

Scott's ring is in good company at Rokeby beside the miniature of Milton, once in the possession of Sir Joshua Reynolds and then passing in succession to Mason, Burgh, and Morritt.

The rents and acreage of Rokeby were after all the smallest part of Morritt's goodly heritage. He was the vindicator of Homer; he was one of the first of the connoisseurs who proclaimed the value of the Elgin Marbles; he had the taste to buy the famous Venus of Velasquez; and he was the lifelong friend of Walter Scott.



IX.

THE ABBOTSFORD HOUSEHOLD

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SIR ADAM FERGUSSON

WILLIE LAIDLAW

TOM PURDIE





## SIR ADAM FERGUSSON.

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THE entry in Scott's Journal for March 7, 1827, describes a dinner of his special cronies, where William Clerk was host and Sir Adam Fergusson danced his "merry andrada." "In short, we really laughed, which is as rare as real tears. I must say there was a *heart*,—a kindly feeling prevailed over the party. Can London give such a dinner?" London could not have afforded at any time such a spectacle as Miss Stirling Graham masquerading as old Lady Pitlyal and taking in the leaders of the Bar and of Society. Mimicry, impersonation, "Mystifications," belong to the Northern capital.

Let a few Scotsmen come together or a Scots family be reunited, old stories will be dragged out and embellished with exactest mimicry of voice and gesture—possibly of the former selves of the party in presence, possibly of some faithful but eccentric retainer, gardener, or old nurse,—imitations of what has been said being eked out by inventions of what, under conceivable circumstances, would have been said. If originals are lacking, types are invented and dialogues improvised, generally in the forcible vernacular of the country.

There is a page in Lockhart which preserves a type of this peculiar form of humour. In May 1817 Constable and John Ballantyne were at Abbotsford negotiating for a new novel, to be called 'Rob Roy.' The early dinners of those days set the company free to stroll

out in the sweetness of the spring evening. The new story was stirring in Scott's brain; the excitement of a good stroke of business quickened the pulses of the stout publisher; John Ballantyne was at all times in a state of effervescence; and a blackbird was singing in the shrubbery at hand. "'Tis a long time, Johnnie, since we have had the Cobbler of Kelso.' Forthwith the little man jumped up on a mass of stone, and, seating himself in the proper attitude of one working with his awl, began to mimic a certain son of Crispin, at whose stall he and Scott had often lingered as schoolboys, and a blackbird, the only companion of his cell, that used to sing to him, while he talked and whistled to it all day long. With this performance Scott was always delighted: nothing could be richer than the contrast of the bird's wild sweet notes—some of which he [John Ballantyne] imitated with wonderful skill—and the accompaniment of the Cobbler's hoarse cracked voice."

So native to the soil is this kind of entertainment that had Charles Lamb accepted Sir Walter's invitation to visit him at Abbotsford, and had there been one evening a similar exhibition, it is quite possible that he might have felt remote and chilled amid the alien laughter. Scott himself was an excellent mimic. That same May evening, walking up and down the lawn, he convulsed his audience with a dialogue between the still-to-be-created "Bailie" and "Rob Roy." Many of his best stories depended on this power of mimicry. The *Journal* hints at a special performance—a certain "Coming from Tripoly"—as the measure of Scott's hilarity and intimacy with his friends. The Clerks were all story-tellers and mimics. But of all Scott's bosom-cronies the man of quickest, lightest, most spontaneous fun, of most triumphant mimicry, and of gentlest, happiest temper, was, by universal testimony, Sir Adam Fergusson.

When Scott and Fergusson were well over fifty, both

happened to be guests of the Lord High Commissioner Adam at Blair-Adam. To "keep the table in a roar" does not, as a rule, apply to a breakfast-table, but Sir Adam began the day with such a flood of gaiety that Scott and Miss Adam, the kind, clever hostess, were left in the breakfast-room exhausted with laughter. "I have often felt," said Scott, "when with other remarkable men, that I had met or might meet with others like them; but one like Adam Fergusson, never!"

Wit that raises such gusts of merriment passes away on the breath of its own laughter, laughter in which posterity has no share. Probably half the charm of Adam Fergusson's fun was that it passed easily into sentiment. Before any note of satiety marred the laughter of his hearers, he was appealing to their emotions by his singing of Scottish songs—the spirited pathetic songs that Scott, the unmusical, loved for their familiar words.

It would be difficult to decide in what group of Scott's friends to place Adam Fergusson, for from the High School days to the last sad years at Abbotsford he belongs to every period of Scott's life. But he has chosen his own place: he belongs to the Abbotsford household. When he gave Wilkie a commission to paint for him the Scott family, Sir Adam insisted that his own lanky figure and quizzical face should be introduced. Like the limner who portrayed the Primrose family in a mixed allegorical and mythological group, Wilkie would only do portraits if he might introduce them in one of his peculiar, homely, genre pictures. The characters of a Border farmer and his family quite fell into the humour of the young Scotts, and Sophia—with a touch of malice more in Anne's vein—described Sir Adam as "looking for all the world like an old poacher who knows his trade."

When both were High School boys it was Adam

Fergusson who introduced Walter Scott into literary society. At Professor Fergusson's house in the Sciennes beyond the Boroughmuir, all the literary and scientific men habitually met. It was there, of course, that Scott had the meeting with Burns. One would like to know if filial piety restrained young Adam from "taking off" to his intimates the flowing periods of Dr Robertson and the stately manner of "Jupiter" Carlyle. He certainly made merry over his vegetarian father,—that noble old Roman,—and his uncle Dr Black, the famous chemist, "rioting over a boiled turnip."

Like many a son growing up in a literary household, Adam turned his quick wits resolutely away from all academic studies, but probably his very nonsense had caught a finer quality from the intellectual influences which he had successfully resisted in his youth.

The friendships of our choice, which spring from common tastes and feed on common pursuits, are richer perhaps and more stimulating but not dearer nor more enduring than the friendships of use and wont rooted far back in schooldays when one boy differs little from another in walk and conversation. As age withdraws a man within the limits of his family circle, there is an ease about the old friend to whom his household concerns are intimately known, who needs no introduction to his other friends, who breaks with him the daily bread of small events.

Other friends enjoyed Scott's stories and mimicries as much as Sir Adam, but no one else made Scott habitually the butt of his humour. One of his favourite exhibitions was an imitation of Scott singing "Awa', Whigs, awa'" with spirit, but neither time nor tune!

A favourite story related an experience of the Blair-Adam Club in search of the stone where Macduff had planted his standard in the revolt against Macbeth. Sir Adam, always lukewarm on the archæological and



keen on the convivial side of these expeditions, proposed to extract the required information from the first intelligent lad, but Scott—as if Edie Ochiltree had never existed—insisted on appealing to the oldest available inhabitant, an old gaberlunzie leaning on a stick.

A question in clear, persuasive Scots having produced no effect, a sixpence followed. The result, though instantaneous, was not enlightening. The aged beggar shouted, whirled his stick above his head, and, with his sixpence, rushed off in the direction of the public-house. He was the village idiot!

The tales of our childhood begin with “Once upon a time,” the tales of our age with “Do you remember?” When two elderly men, Scott and Fergusson, trod the well-beaten path that led through Scott’s favourite plantations from Abbotsford to Huntly Burn, or when at Walker Street they lingered over their wine, these words prefaced old stories of “bickers” in the Meadows, of fights in the High School Yards, of midnight frolics with “the Club,” of hard days’ drilling on Portobello sands. There was that expedition made in company to the Highlands when both were “writers’” apprentices, and the walking tour when the stately hospitality of Stirling of Keir had awed talkative Adam from the use of his tongue, and this and that and a hundred other pleasant tales.

The manners in the Fergusson household must have been charming. When the old Professor and his daughters were living at Neidpath Castle, a stranger called and was so courteously entertained that it was only after dinner was ended that he succeeded in explaining that he was the Peebles’ butcher calling for custom!

There was a more portentous neighbour at Halyards (the lonely house in the valley of the Manor, where the Fergussons settled about 1796), and one more diffi-

cult to entertain. David Ritchie, a solitary cross-grained dwarf, had the grudge against well-grown humanity so painful in the misshapen, but something in Scott's face—or possibly his lameness—attracted and conciliated the little misanthrope. He led him into his smoky cottage, drew the rusty bolt, and, seizing him by the wrist, whispered, “Ha'e ye ony pooer?”—meaning magical power. At that moment the light was obscured by a big black cat jumping suddenly into the deep window-bole and standing with arched back silhouetted against the light. “*He* has pooer” added the dwarf, pointing at his familiar. Scott admitted that his nerve had been momentarily shaken. It was worth the shock to have found the germ of ‘The Black Dwarf.’

A merrier adventure was a visit to a neighbouring household, when Scott undertook to entertain the laird with antiquarian lore while penniless Adam proposed to one of the six pretty daughters among the gooseberry bushes. Despite Scott's diplomacy the laird's wrath descended suddenly on the swain—not for making love to his daughter but for picking his own particular gooseberries!

Adam Fergusson, like most Edinburgh youths of condition, was bred to the law, but his restless disposition refused to settle to any grave occupation. It was a time of war and commissions easily obtainable by young gentlemen of spirit. If Professor Fergusson sighed to see three of his sons following the profession of arms—one at sea, two in the army—he knew that remonstrance would come with little force from the *ci-devant* army chaplain who, at Fontenoy, had charged with his Highlanders, and had flung his commission with a “Damn my commission” at the commanding officer who reminded him of his sacred character.

If a poet might choose a special destiny for his verses—especially one like Scott, who was only a poet because he could not be a soldier—it would surely be

to have them recited to the rhythm of marching feet or read by camp-fires to relieve the tedium of night-watches. In 1811, when "*Don Roderick*" was published, Scott was accustomed to the world's applause: he extracted the kindness; as for the praise, he held it lightly. Better than Canning's praise, better even than Lady Wellington's touching thanks for his tribute to "the first and best of men," was a letter from his old school-fellow at Lisbon "with the rough sons of the fighting Third Division."

There had been silence between the friends for ten years; then, as so often happens, simultaneously they had made advances, Scott despatching a presentation copy of "*Don Roderick*" at the very time when Fergusson was writing to describe the enthusiasm the '*Lady of the Lake*' had excited at Torres Vedras. "While the book was in my possession I had nightly invitations to evening parties to read and illustrate passages in it." The "war broken" soldier's letter ends with aspirations after "a snug little farm on Tweedside,"—an aspiration Scott was to help him to realise.

Old Professor Fergusson lived on to the age of ninety-three. He had the gifts and the conditions that make for longevity: a spare body with an alert mind, a sweet nature with an irritable temper, a light vegetarian diet, and three kind daughters to anticipate his wishes.

In the last years of his life he had settled at St Andrews—in all generations an austere but kindly home for "age to wear away in." The European war had kept him alive, from sheer interest in the issue; with peace came lassitude and a swift painless decay. Again, as in the history of the Keiths, three maiden ladies whose youth had gone in cheerful devotion to the head of the house found themselves in middle age constrained to make a new home and find new objects of interest. Fortunately the Fergussons had the same warm family

affections as the Keiths. Captain Adam had had adventures since the days when he had read the 'Lady of the Lake' aloud to his men in the lines of Torres Vedras under the enemy's fire; he had been a prisoner in France, had suffered hardships, but had met with some favour from Napoleon for the sake of his uncle, the celebrated chemist, Dr Black. The peace had left him at a loose end and quite ready to set up house with his elderly sisters, on the sole condition that the new home should be within walking distance of Abbotsford.

Two passions Sir Walter had, the hunger for land and eagerness to benefit his friends. He saw that he could satisfy both instincts when, in 1817, there came into the market the neighbouring estate of Toftfield marching with Abbotsford, containing the Rhymer's Glen and including a comfortable modern house. "Just the thing to suit you and the ladies," he assured Captain Fergusson when they went together to see the place. The Shirra's earth-hunger had run up the price of every acre adjoining Abbotsford, and Adam Fergusson's prudent Scottish mind took alarm when he heard Scott agree to the exorbitant demand for £10,000. "Walter, I'm afraid you've been rather rash here." "Don't say a word about it,—it will just answer you and the ladies exactly; and what although it be a long price? Why, I've only to spin a few more of those old stories to pay for it."

So in 1818 Captain Fergusson and his sisters settled in their new home, and Sophia and Anne anticipated "a merry summer of it with Captain Fergusson for so near a neighbour."

As the original possession "Clarty Hole" had been re-named Abbotsford, so from henceforth Toftfield, under the name of Huntly Burn, was to be associated—quite erroneously—with True Thomas and the Faery Queen.

A few years later Sir Walter—whose beautiful, un-



principled zeal would have "jobbed" his friends into every post in the kingdom—secured for Adam Fergusson the sinecure of Keepership of the Scottish Regalia and the honour of knighthood, to the intense disgust of Tom Purdie, who felt that it dimmed the glory of "our title."

When Sir Adam married a prosperous widow the new home, Gattonside House, was still within walking distance of Abbotsford.

Meanwhile the ladies—the "Weird Sisters" as Sir Walter called his old friends—had settled down at Huntly Burn to the active benevolent life of ladies in the country. They gardened and trained honeysuckle over their porch, and showed kindness "to all around them, from men and women down to hedge-sparrows and lame ass-colts,"—and Walter Scott delighted in their society. The eldest, Miss Bell, was quiet and retiring, with all the shy, eager motherliness of the sweetest type of old maid; Miss Mary was deformed and romantic, rising early on summer mornings and wandering over the moors,—“the daft leddie” the Melrose children used to call her; Miss Margaret was a feminine edition of Sir Adam, with much of his humour and quaintness. Though much older, she was the dearest friend of Sophia in her matron days, when she and Lockhart lived at Chiefswood, a cottage a little lower down the Rhymer’s Glen. Scott’s visits to Chiefswood and his walks to Melrose brought him daily past the door of Huntly Burn, and in the country there is a discourtesy in passing a neighbour’s door without a greeting. When Moore visited Scott in 1822 he was, of course, taken to wait on “the ladies” at Huntly Burn. He noticed “the plain, quiet, neighbourly manner with which he (Sir Walter) took his seat among these old maids, and the familiar ease with which they treated him in return: no country squire could have fallen into the gossip of a humdrum visit more unassumingly.”



Moore himself only cared to frequent the well-born and witty, and left to "Bessie," his lovable wife, the simple pleasures of neighbourliness and friendly intimacy. He could not understand Scott's genuine interest in all the "clash of the country"; probably their old-fashioned ways and Scottish tongues concealed from his superficial observation the strong character and excellent sense of the ladies.

Sophia had all her father's unquestioning acceptance of old friends, but when Anne was hostess at Abbotsford she may have had livelier and more select plans for her parties and picnics. When Sir Henry Taylor paid a visit to Abbotsford in 1831 Sir Walter was sadly stricken in health, and often sat heavy and silent through the course of whole meals. "A question arose at dinner whether two elderly ladies, neighbours, should be asked to a picnic. Someone said they would not add much to its liveliness—would, in fact, be "bores"; whereupon a light came into the sick man's eyes and a flush to his cheek, and he exclaimed, "I cannot call that good breeding." It is easy to guess the identity of the old maids.

In the genteel comedy of the wooing and wedding of Walter Scott, the younger, Sir Adam Fergusson has a leading part. In a letter to Lady Abercorn, written at a time when marriage and giving in marriage were far below the horizon, Sir Walter had laid down the irreproachable rule—"My son must marry for love and work for money"; but when, in 1824, Lady Fergusson's gentle niece, Miss Jobson, came to visit her aunt at Gattonside House, and Sir Adam suggested that the little lady's property in Fife and two thousand pounds a-year would nicely balance young Walter's regimentals and baronetcy in reversion, Sir Walter took his cue as readily as the worldly father in the first act of a comedy. East and west the situation is repeated every day.

“Is it an echo of something  
Read with a boy's delight ;  
Viziers nodding together  
In an Arabian Night?  
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Strange that I hear two men  
Somewhere talking of me ;  
‘Well, if it prove a girl, my boy  
Will have plenty, so let it be.’”

Did none of the lovers of his own creation, Frank Osbaldistone or Quentin Durward or—fondest of them all—Harry Gow, shake reproachful heads at Sir Walter when he penned that cryptic letter wherein, in a parable from the “Merry Wives of Windsor,” he laid before son Walter the obvious advantages of the match? Did the ghost of his own youth throw no protesting shadow on the golden prospect he was unfolding? All we know is that Nature so tempered the clay in this her favourite child, that the very worldliness that would have hardened another man's heart only gave his a new channel for showing the overflowing goodness of it. Perhaps from a secret compunction that the girl had not had a fair share of romance and passionate service in her wooing, he himself seems always trying to make up for all deficiencies by the fatherly warmth and tenderness of his expressions towards his “little Jane.”

## WILLIE LAIDLAW.

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ONE of the most triumphant moments of Scott's life was in 1815, when, in writing to Miss Baillie, he signed himself "Abbotsford and Kaeside." The Abbotsford property was made up of several small lairdships: Clarty Hole, Kaeside, Toftfield and Chiefswood,—so that, besides the "Romance in Stone," the "Conundrum Castle," which was the joy and the bane of Scott's life, there were three comfortable modern residences on the property. Nothing could have fallen in better with Scott's feudal plan of life,—a plan in which, however, game and game-preserving had no part.

He early set his heart on "a little hamlet of labourers" on the property to be called Abbotstown,—“for I have no notion of the proprietor who is only ambitious to be lord of ‘the beast and the brute,’ and chases the human face from his vicinity.” Even in his benevolence Scott understood the people he had to deal with, and added this saving reservation to his scheme: “The art of making people happy is to leave them much to their own guidance.”

But besides the vassals dependent on him for employment and habitation, he had the three households, Kaeside, Huntly Burn, Chiefswood, whose tenure was to dine with the laird when required and to share in all his sports and interests.

Kaeside, the smallest and nearest of the three houses,

was the home of Scott's friend and factor, Willie Laidlaw. Thither, through Turnagain and Broomy Knowe plantations, Scott's steps carried him at least once a-day. The three little Eppie Daidles—Scott's own name for little girlies—playing round the door were as pleased to see the "Shirra" as he was to see them; the quiet, dignified house-mother was never discomposed by visits at any hour of the day, for at every moment of his Abbotsford life Scott needed Willie Laidlaw.

There was always business to discuss, questions of building, planting, farming; or there was a ballad that must be shown, some antiquarian point to be cleared, or perhaps there was a guest like Moore or Washington Irving, too good to be kept all to himself even for one afternoon; and there was Willie Laidlaw always ready with his kind intensity of sympathy. When Scott told his thrice-told Border Tales, or pointed out familiar scenes to appreciative strangers, Laidlaw's rich, silent enjoyment was better than any commentary. To his singular nature, at once enthusiastic and reticent, diffident of himself and confident in his intuitions, it was purest happiness to be the intermediary between the things he loved and those who, he knew, would understand and love, and possibly turn them to more account.

This had always been his character.

Tweed, Teviot, Ettrick had each her own "poetic child." To Scott and Tweed belong the whole range of Border tradition, the dim Arthurian realm of Reged, the mediæval sanctuaries of Melrose and Dryburgh, the tramp of invading armies, the glare of beacon-fires, the household life in many a lonely Glendearg. To Leyden and Teviot belong the dangerous neighbourhood of the English Border, the wild moss-trooper on his rough pony—Kinmont Willie, or Dick o' the Cow; the rage of harried men bringing the fray to friendly peels all down the water; the heartsome cry of "Rise for Branksome readily." To Hogg and Ettrick belong a

loneliness deeper, a remoteness more complete than to any of the sister valleys. No travelled road leads from the head waters of Ettrick into the low country, above Thirlstane is no stronghold nor ruined keep; it is a smooth deep valley, the home of shepherd folk. It is a land where primitive ways and beliefs lingered on, where fairies danced round green hillocks, and brownies served in farm kitchens, and witches rode on winter storms, and where, interwoven with these earlier superstitions, serious, unlearned men kept the purity of their Covenanting creed. To Yarrow, of all the rivers most besung and dearest loved, belongs the pathetic articulate music of the Border, the names that stir the heart, the ballads of forgotten singers, the songs of poets who, passing on their way, have felt the spell of the pensive valley. The same generation that gave Scott to Tweed, Leyden to Teviot, and Hogg to Ettrick, bred up in the vale of Yarrow a fourth lad, in spirit and perception akin to the other three, William Laidlaw.

If the gift of utterance was denied to Willie Laidlaw, it was partly owing to his fastidious self-criticism, partly to a contentment so deep in the thing perceived that he rarely attempted expression of it. When another found the expression it was a glad excitement to him. When a boy at Blackhouse—a farm in a narrow glen a mile or two from St Mary's Loch—he had found in his father's shepherd, James Hogg, a poetic glow, a fulness of vitality that captivated his gentler spirit. In secret he believed in Hogg's genius, and his faith was to be confirmed in the most delightful manner by one whose judgment seemed to him final. In 1802 Scott—recently appointed Sheriff of the Forest—had come with Leyden to Blackhouse to pick up ballads and to view the scene of the Douglas Tragedy.

To realise the delight of those early excursions of Scott's one must remember that at that date all remoter country-sides were practically unknown except to their



own inhabitants. No macadamised roads led through the hills, no pictures nor guide-books taught the traveller what to expect. We find Scott asking Morrison, his engineering friend, for every particular concerning Caerlaverock Castle, and at another time giving him a roving commission to draw for him whatever old castles he fell in with on his work of surveying. Two memorable moments in Scott's life were the first times he looked down on Loch Katrine and on St Mary's Loch. That first view of Loch Katrine Lockhart places in the days of Scott's apprenticeship, when he visited the Highlands on some lawyer's business. But an old friend, one of the Misses Macdonald Buchanan, used in her age to tell a different story. According to her, Scott, as a boy, was on a visit to her father's house on the borders of Perthshire and Stirlingshire. On his expressing great delight in two beautiful lakes in the neighbourhood, Loch Vennachar and Loch Achray, the lively girl offered to guide him to a third lake, "known only to the shepherds," far more remote and lovely than the other two. Accordingly the pair, a happy lad and lass, started early on a summer morning, on one stout pony—she riding pillion—followed a rough track and found the unknown lake lying in the afternoon sunshine, and returned late in the evening—and "Oh, how tired we were!" So the old lady finished a story so pretty that one would like to believe it historically accurate, though against it is the fact that the Trossachs were already at this period well known to travellers in search of the picturesque. Of Scott's first view of St Mary's Loch we have an account from the sober pen of Willie Laidlaw. When Scott, leaving the track up Yarrow, turned up the bare stony valley of the Douglas Burn, he was thinking only of the wild ride of the lady and her lover, the combat with the seven brethren, and all the woeful chances of the Douglas Tragedy. At the junction of two branches of the stream he found the authentic castle—Blackhouse Tower—a mere shell,

strongly built and lichen-covered, and, within a stone's-throw, a plain bald farmhouse with the customary group of high ash-trees sheltering it from the north. To one dweller in that farmhouse "the hour had come and the man." Willie Laidlaw was a lad of twenty-two, shy, fervid, imaginative : he had collected ballads and legends, he had eagerly encouraged Hogg in his poetical endeavours, and had tried his own hand at verse ; he and Hogg and some like-minded young fellows over in Ettrick had founded a sort of a literary society, and were willing to walk miles over the hills to attend its meetings. Now he was to find that all the tastes he had cherished in secret were fully shared by the "Shirra" and by his vociferous companion. That evening hosts and guests were equally pleased with each other. Scott had found his ballad ; he had found in "the mistress"—though he did not know it at the time—the prototype of one of the sweetest of his feminine characters, Ailie Dinmont ; and he had found in the son of the house one of the kindest and most faithful of his friends. The next morning, in a silent fervour of enthusiasm, young Laidlaw guided the travellers by a bridle-path over a ridge into a parallel valley. From the top of the pass the view suddenly discloses St Mary's Loch reflecting the smooth rounded hills that fold around her.

Leyden sprang from his horse in the energy of his admiration. Scott stood silent, taking it in, and Laidlaw was satisfied. "Often, when returning home with my fishing-rod, had I stopped at this point and admired the effect of the setting-sun and the approaching twilight ; and now, when I saw it admired by those I thought likely to judge and be affected by its beauty, I felt the same sort of pleasure that I experienced when I found that Walter Scott was delighted with James Hogg."

To have on his land vassals contented and affectionate was the dream—noble, but deluding—of Scott's life.

By a rarer tenure he held men like Willie Laidlaw, John Leyden, and later, Joseph Train, the generous exciseman, in a kind of literary vassalage. The first due William Laidlaw paid in kind was the ballad of the "Dæmon Lover," collected in Borthwick Water from the recitation of an old man. More strictly feudal was the gift of a brace of carefully trained black greyhounds, the "Percy" and "Douglas" who came and went through the window of the Ashestiel dining-room when Scott was at work, dogs celebrated in 'Marmion':—

"Remember'st thou my greyhounds true?  
O'er holt or hill there never flew,  
From slip or leash there never sprang,  
More fleet of foot, or sure of fang."

One of the advantages of a poor and warlike society is that every man has a pedigree, and all his neighbours know it. In the sparse population of the Border the humblest household stood out distinctly; deeds of lawless daring more than anything else keep a family's memory green. The Laidlaws had not only a pedigree, they had a curse all of their own. As early as the sixteenth century a witch-woman married into the family and laid a curse on her descendants. By strange pagan rites—a sacrificial heifer, and the ashes sprinkled on the running streams—the curse of failure and landlessness was for a moment suspended, only to fall on later generations of a family once rich and powerful. In William Laidlaw's case the family character, an easy trust in other men, diffidence in pushing his own claims, a habit of poetic abstraction, all assisted the family curse. As a practical farmer he failed, and in 1817—a married man and the father of three little girls—he would have been constrained to begin the world again if Scott had not offered him Kaeside as a home, and proposed to him to contribute regularly to Blackwood's recently-started magazine. "Lucy's Flittin'" is fortunately with us to

attest what Willie Laidlaw could do with his pen; that it and it only remains to us, proves how tardily and unwillingly he found literary expression; even with Scott's help he found the chronicle for Blackwood irksome. This he might have overcome, but his taste and feeling were disturbed by the wild doings of Blackwood's young contributors; his staunch but unobtrusive Whiggism was at odds with their militant Toryism.

Fortunately Scott's prosperity at this time allowed his having a factor, his planting and building operations justified it. "I am quite aware," he once wrote to Laidlaw, "that you take more care of my affairs than you would of your own." And all Scott's "affairs" were Laidlaw's affairs, the novels as well as the oak and birch plantations. Lockhart has given a diverting account of Laidlaw's services as amanuensis when, in the intervals of freedom from pain, Scott dictated 'Ivanhoe' and the 'Bride of Lammermoor,' though Laidlaw used with warmth to deny the exclamations—"Gude keep us a'!" "The like o' that!"—which Lockhart, for dramatic effect, attributes to him.

Scott certainly discussed his work freely with Laidlaw. There is a story in the 1831 Introduction to the 'Lady of the Lake' which it is impossible not to refer to Laidlaw. Scott describes how he had tried reading the first canto to a friend who chanced to visit him. "He was bred a farmer, but a man of powerful understanding, natural good taste, and warm poetical feeling. . . . He was a passionate admirer of field-sports, which we often pursued together. He . . . listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs threw themselves into the lake to follow their master. . . . He then started up with a sudden exclamation, . . . and declared, in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been utterly ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase."

This realistic criticism was delightfully encouraging.



It was to a remark of Laidlaw's, made from a hill overlooking Melrose, to the effect that there was sufficient material for a novel in that little town in the current year of grace, that Scott owed the plan of 'St Ronan's Well.' The remark was just and characteristic of him who made it, but it was not a happy inspiration for Scott.

Laidlaw's wife was a Miss Ballantyne of Holylee. Scott would like her all the better for her gentle Border blood. Her innate dignity and old-fashioned sense of fitness were sorely tried by her husband's old friend Hogg, who often descended, self-invited, at Kaeside. She suffered painfully—and, one must add, gratuitously—on one occasion when Hogg accompanied her and her husband to Abbotsford, and stretched himself genially at full length on Lady Scott's sofa.

The cheerful family life at Kaeside was a constant pleasure to Scott; moreover, he liked and respected the kind of people the Laidlaws brought about them. Laidlaw counted Covenanters among his forebears,—so, for that matter, did Scott. A kinsman of Laidlaw's, an old Mr Grieve, was an uncompromising Cameronian who ministered to a "scattered remnant of the hill-folk" in the wilds of Ettrick. This old saint—"a man of apostolical benignity of aspect"—Scott was eager to secure as a tenant at Abbotsford. "The great Cameron," he wrote to Laidlaw, "was chaplain in the house of my great something grandfather, and so I hope Mr Grieve will be in mine. If," he adds sily, "a little persecution is necessary to make his home entirely to his mind, . . . I have a pair of thumbikins also much at his service." We might have had some additional pages of 'Old Mortality,' or some more peculiarities of David Deans, had the old hill-man become Scott's tenant.

Of all the guests who have recorded their impressions of Abbotsford, Washington Irving has given the most "innerly" description of the family life. Scott saw what most appealed to the warm heart and quick percep-



tion of this open-eyed visitor from the new world. When, as usual, the Kaeside party came to dine, they were accompanied by "a very respectable, intelligent female friend . . . whom Scott treated with particular attention and courtesy. . . . 'I wished to show you,' said Scott after they were gone, 'some of our really excellent plain Scotch people; . . . the character of a nation is not to be learned from its fine folk. . . .'" He then with much sympathy and interest told the lady's history. She was left an orphan and destitute, when her father, a poor minister, died weighed down with debt. Having had a good plain education, she opened a school for children. A decent maintenance was far less her object than to pay her father's debts, that no ill word might rest on his memory. "This, by dint of Scotch economy, backed by filial reverence and pride, she did, though in the effort she subjected herself to every privation. . . . In a word, she's a fine old Scotch girl, and I delight in her more than in many a fine lady I have known,—and I have known many of the finest."

It is pleasant to have a description of this party from the Kaeside point of view. Willie Laidlaw, writing to his brother, says: "Miss Cramond, whom God for ever bless, returned to us on Saturday night in the midst of very wet weather, and Mr Scott was so kind as to invite Janet and her to dine there on Sunday. He called at Kaeside for the purpose." The night turned out so wet that, short as was the distance, Mr Laidlaw had to requisition one of the farm-carts to carry the ladies and their "braws." There never was a more successful entertainment even at Abbotsford, and never a guest departed more fully satisfied than the "fine old Scotch girl." "I was extremely delighted," Willie Laidlaw adds, "at Miss C.'s being invited to Abbotsford and at the attention they paid her. When we were coming home she said she would not have wanted this night for five hundred pounds!"

We owe few debts to Sir Walter so great as that page of the *Journal* for December 18, 1825, in which, in the first swift conviction of disaster, he communed with his own heart. Only two names occur on it: "Poor Will Laidlaw! poor Tom Purdie! this will be news to wring your heart, and many a poor fellow's besides to whom my prosperity was daily bread."

As far as one can gather from the reticence of Willie Laidlaw's letters, the blow did not fall altogether unexpectedly. He must have had misgivings about what he calls the "glitter" of the Abbotsford life. All his life he had lived with financial anxiety; the effect of Scott's failure on his own fortunes was but another stroke of adverse fortune, to be met with the sad patience native to his character.

Scott felt it one of the bitterest consequences of his failure that he and Laidlaw had, for a time, to part: the estate was administered for the trustees, and there was no room for a factor. In breaking this decision, Scott speaks of the "patience and endurance" of Laidlaw's earlier misfortunes, "which have set me so good an example."

Lockhart tells us that Laidlaw's skill and taste had turned the plain little house at Kaeside into a graceful home. That home had now to be left; employment had to be found among strangers for a man who had for nine years shared the household life of Abbotsford. But fortitude was the rock-bed of Laidlaw's gentle nature. There is a pencil sketch of him done about this date by William Allen. The face is worn, the features fine and marked, the chin small; the power of the face is in the broad intellectual brow, the charm in the large delicate eyelids. It is a patient face, with no assertiveness nor any weakness.

In one point fate relented: for the last two or three years of Scott's life he was to have the dear companionship and service of William Laidlaw. Tom Purdie's

death in the autumn of 1829 made it necessary to have some one on the spot who knew the estate and its management. In the unavoidable absence of Lockhart and of Major Scott it was of infinite moment that Anne Scott should have at hand a man as affectionate and responsible as a near kinsman. In those saddest days when the bewildered powers strove feverishly to overtake their task, it was Laidlaw's office to write from dictation chapters of 'Count Robert of Paris' and 'Castle Dangerous.'

In the letter of 23rd December 1825, when Scott took his first farewell of Laidlaw, he had given him this testimony: "You never flattered me in my prosperity." But somewhere there is plenary absolution for the loving heart that flatters in adversity. When the dictated sentences fell fluently and unobstructed, Laidlaw did not too nicely weigh the content. Scott, haunted by the sense of lessening powers, was wistfully alive to criticism at this date. "Willie is a kind scribe," he writes; "I see by his face when he is pleased, and then that pleases me."

Yet on one point, even for love of Scott, would Laidlaw not dissemble his real opinion: he welcomed the approaching Reform Bill as the beginning of the millennium. This difference of opinion led to no estrangement, only it deepened Scott's painful feeling of sudden isolation in a world where everything he loved and revered seemed rushing down.

In spite of his reserve—as natural in the man as necessary in the biographer,—Lockhart's sympathies and antipathies among Scott's intimates are perceptible enough. In the tenderness observable in every mention of Laidlaw one seems to feel the influence of Sophia, the kind, uncritical affection of one familiar from childhood.

In the last chapter of the Life, Laidlaw is as closely identified with the Abbotsford family as Lockhart him-

self. From that chapter one cannot extract quotations; lovers of Scott know every sentence of it; those who have forgotten it will turn to it again.

We have, however, from the reticent pen of Willie Laidlaw a moving description of one of the days following the funeral. He had gone up to Abbotsford to request the loan of a gig to go to a fair at St Boswells on business for the estate. Walter and Charles were busy over papers, but called Mr Laidlaw into the room, and Major Scott presented him with the most precious of relics, the locket with his and his wife's hair which his father had always worn round his neck. So deep was Laidlaw's emotion that for several days after he could regard it with no feeling but pain. That evening he went up to say good-bye to the sisters, tender-hearted Sophia wept bitterly, held both his hands in hers and called him her father's oldest friend.

## TOM PURDIE.

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THE cynic who first declared that no man was a hero to his valet may or may not have hit the weak point of the hero; he certainly hit wide of the mark where the valet was concerned—at least, if among valets we include the mediæval serving-man, or the old-fashioned Scots “body-servant.” What constrained Gurth the swineherd to offer in defence of his master’s property the zechins that should have purchased his own freedom? what instructed him to buckle on armour and lead steed to stall? What induced Cuddie Headrigg to take service with Henry Morton at the lowest ebb of his fortunes with the proposition, “Let you and me gang and pouss our fortunes like the folks in the daft auld tales of Jack the Giantkiller or Valentine and Orson”? What compelled Richie Moniplies to play the part of a pragmatist and pharisaic providence to the follies and fortunes of Nigel Olifaunt? What made Caleb Balderstone deliberately imperil his soul for the honour of the family? what crazed his brain, and at last broke the faithful old heart? What but the romantic instinct that compels a simple man to leave his fellows and to identify himself with a life which he vaguely feels to be ampler, more spirited, more full of colour and adventure than any that he could achieve for himself? If there was a thing that Scott understood to the quick it was the heart of a serving-man. In many of the best novels a servant has an important part, and even those more casually mentioned always play an honest



and sympathetic part. No pettish irritability can alienate Sir Arthur Wardour's kindly Robert when bankruptcy threatens the house; Mr Archibald has all the dignity and magnanimity of his master, MacCallum More, when he escorts Jeanie Deans to Scotland; La Jeunesse—the saner prototype of Caleb Balderstone—is as perfect a gentleman of the *ancien régime* as the master whose old coat he brushes. All these quaint and lovable and worthy traits Scott drew straight from his own experiences, and, though he would have denied that any of the Abbotsford retainers—except perhaps Will Straiton, his “man of proverbs”—had the self-sufficiency and egotism of Andrew Fairservice, they certainly supplied him with some of his picturesque phrases and habits.

The summer evening when Frank Osbaldistone surprises the Sabbath exercises of the Scottish gardener is drawn directly from a frequent and favourite experience at Abbotsford. A hedge of holly separated the cottage of Peter Mathieson, the coachman, from the smooth bowling-green where the laird took his evening stroll. “In truth,” he said to Lockhart, “I wished to have a smooth walk, and a canny seat for myself within earshot of Peter’s evening psalm.” “The coachman was a devout Presbyterian, and many a time have I”—it is, of course, Lockhart who is speaking—“in after years accompanied Scott on his evening stroll, when the principal object was to enjoy the unfailing melody of this good man’s family worship.”

In a passage of the *Journal* Scott differentiates between the friendship possible with an outdoor servant and the inevitable restraint with footman or butler. As a matter of fact, so strong was the attachment of Dalgleish, the Abbotsford butler, that he insisted on staying on after the failure, doing double work at a lowered salary with increased zeal. Even more touching was the devotion of Nicholson, a young footman who had grown up in the house. He accompanied Sir Walter to Naples,

waiting on him with unfailing tact and kindness and presence of mind. Men, not women, tended Sir Walter's deathbed. It was to William Laidlaw he made that saddest of complaints, "No rest for Sir Walter but in the grave"; it was John Nicholson who watched his sick-bed; it was Lockhart to whom he addressed his last unforgettable message; it was his son Major Scott who closed his eyes.

The servants of all his friends were distinct personalities to Scott, to be warmly welcomed and inquired after. If for convenience he occupied the rumble with a footman, conversation flowed unrestrainedly and was unaffectedly interesting to both talkers. Perhaps the functionary furthest removed from our idea of a romantic poet is a *chef-de-cuisine*, yet the French *artiste* who presided over the ducal kitchen at Bowhill loved, when Sir Walter was a guest, to compliment him with mediæval erections of pastry or marchpane. The hunt, cut out of toast, galloping over a landscape of boiled spinach,—the triumph of La Jeunesse's skill,—was perhaps a reminiscence of a Bowhill *plat*.

Still Scott's relation to all other servants differed essentially from the constant enjoyment, the entire easiness, the equal affection of his intercourse with Tom Purdie. Tom had grown up in the conditions furthest from servility—he had been a shepherd and a poacher. It was in the latter capacity that he had made the acquaintance of the "Shirra." The poor fellow's pleading poverty and a sick wife, and a certain sly humour that he had, appealed to Scott, who took him into his own service, first as shepherd, then forester, gamekeeper, factotum, confidential adviser, and self-constituted librarian. For his love of Scott extended to everything that Scott loved, from the trees, which Tom understood perhaps as well as the laird, to "our books,"—the novels,—in which he took a proprietary pride, though personally they acted on him as soporifics.

“He was remarkably fastidious in his care of the library, and it was exceedingly amusing to see a clod-hopper (for he was always in the garb of a ploughman) moving about in the splendid apartment, . . . scrutinising the state of the books, putting derangement to rights; remonstrating when he observed anything that indicated carelessness.” The description is from the pen of James Skene, always quick to see what was quaint and lovable in the people about him. Tom thought more of him than of all Scott’s other friends. He respected Skene as a salmon-fisher, and confided secrets of the craft which he considered his monopoly. He had, perhaps, no such phenomenal success to get over in Skene as the enormous sea-trout of 1810 which Tom so bitterly grudged to John Richardson — “him frae Lunnon.” Tom Purdie was a “character.” It is only a strong individuality that can entirely identify itself with another. He had taught himself to look at the outer world through Scott’s romantic eyes. “When I came here first,” he said to Mrs Laidlaw, “I knew nae mair than a cow what was pretty and what was ugly. I was cuif enough to think the bonniest thing in a countryside was a cornfield enclosed in four stone dykes: but now I ken the difference. Look this way, Mrs Laidlaw, and I’ll show you what the gentlefolks like. See ye there now, the sun glinting on Melrose Abbey? . . .”

Scotland has always been the most democratic of feudal societies till now, when in country places, at least, she is the most feudal of democracies. Laird and servant both being Scots, they had their wrangles over trees and pathways. When Scott’s orders became final, Tom would save his dignity by turning up in the evening to inform his master that “on thinking the matter over he had decided to follow his advice”! The tolerance of the age for certain weaknesses rendered the relation of master and man less liable to friction. “Tom Purdie could be trusted,” as Scott informed Washing-

ton Irving, "with untold gold, but not with unmeasured whisky!"

Lockhart was not Scott: something in his stately outer man would have checked his speaking as Scott did "to every man on the estate as if he were a blood-relation," but he felt profoundly the goodness and affection of the Abbotsford household; he felt it both as a tribute to Scott and as a testimony to the quality of the Scottish peasantry. There is no tenderer passage in the seven volumes than the paragraphs in chapter iii. of vol. vii. which describe the behaviour of the Abbotsford servants after the failure. "I cannot forget, in particular, how his eyes sparkled when he first pointed out to me Peter Mathieson guiding the plough on the haugh: 'Egad,' he said, 'auld Pepe' (this was the children's name for their good old friend) 'auld Pepe's whistling at his darg. The honest fellow said a yoking in a deep field would do baith him and the blackies good. If things get round with me, easy shall be Pepe's cushion.'"

Concerning Pepe's brother-in-law, Tom Purdie, there was never a doubt. In the first shock of ruin on December 17, 1825, Scott looked forward to losing Abbotsford and all the goodly life he had built up there. As soon as it was clear that the old life, in straitened fashion, could be continued, the decision followed: "As for Tom, he and I go to the grave together."

The farm was given up, and Tom devoted himself to the plantations and to personal attendance on his master, who needed now a shoulder to lean on, and a flow of reminiscences, shrewd comment or cheerful planning, to distract his thoughts. "Tom Purdie," he writes on 1st April 1826, "carries my plaid and speaks when he pleases, telling long stories of hits and misses in shooting twenty years back,"—Scott sometimes listening, sometimes watching the gambols of two Dandie Dinmont puppies, or "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy."

"What a blessing," so runs another entry, "is a man

like Tom whom no familiarity can spoil, whom you may scold and praise and joke with, knowing the quality of the man is unalterable in his love and reverence for his master."

Through the toiling years which ensued when the task pressed ever more hardly on the failing powers, those days with Tom in the plantations—either plunging through the snow, or when the sap was stirring in spring, or in autumn when the trees were marked for thinning—were the solace of Scott's life.

The will might not shrink from its task, but at times the heart turned wearily from the business relations and social distractions of town life. In a moment of lassitude Scott wrote on March 4, 1828: "I shall be glad to be at Abbotsford to get rid of this town where I have not, in the proper sense of the word, a single friend whose company pleases me. *In the country I have always Tom Purdie.*"

Of course the complaint was not deliberately meant. The town contained many old acquaintances and comrades—though some of the dearest had recently died. In especial there were still the old cronies, William Clerk and Thomas Thomson; "that good Samaritan, Skene," was ready as ever to give his company, his pleasant talk, or kind confederate silences. Each of these would gladly have been the special friend to lighten Scott's days and ease his heart: but all must waive their claim,—"*In the country I have always Tom Purdie.*"





X.

SCOTT'S RELATION TO OTHER POETS

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CAMPBELL

CRABBE

MOORE

LORD BYRON

WORDSWORTH AND SOUTHEY



## CAMPBELL.

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By a curious chance two letters, written on the same summer evening, 28th August 1802, and dating from the same country house, Minto, have fallen into the hands of posterity. Distinctly, as if it were to-day, we can see the shades of evening falling—"dark and comfortless" young Thomas Campbell tells us—on the woods and crags around the house. In an upper room the lights are lit, for the master of the house is busy with his correspondence; but in the "entertaining room" below the twilight is allowed to deepen, for sufficient reasons, and the windows are probably open, for the sound of merriment—"the lords and ladies laughing in the room below me"—rises to the window where, lonely and home-sick, Thomas Campbell is pouring out his soul with all a young man's delight in self-expression.

There is a pleasant feeling of leisure—the leisure of a busy man's short holiday—in the letter written that evening by Lord Minto to Lady Palmerston. He describes himself as sitting with *her*—so most significantly he designates that true wife and equal partner from whom his public life kept him too often separate,—with *her* and Lady Malmesbury, her lively sister. The three elders had retreated upstairs to the library, my lord to work off his correspondence and my ladies to

carry on that intimate *causerie* of which we have tantalising snatches in the few letters of theirs hitherto published. The letter-writer pauses to smile good-humouredly as some burst of laughter from below reaches his ears, and remarks to his correspondent, "Gilbert and his friends take a good deal of their amusement either on the rivers or on the hills, and in the evening the younger part of the society form a circle without candles and tell hobgoblin stories till supper-time: the conversation is not confined to the narrator, but the whole ring is so vociferous that they have merited the title of Pandemonium. . . . We have had a most capital addition to the Hobgoblinites in Mr Walter Scott, editor of the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,' who, besides an inexhaustible fund of spectres, has a rich store of horrid murders, robberies, and other bloody exploits committed by and on our own forefathers, the Elliots. Mr Scott is a particularly pleasing and entertaining man."

It was indeed a picked audience that Scott had on those evenings for his tales: the Border names appealed to every one alike. If Scott counted Wat of Harden and the Flower of Yarrow and the Riding Rutherfords among his ancestors, his hosts counted kin with

" . . . Sir Gilbert Elliot, called  
The Laird of Stobs, I mean the same."

To sit aloof and alone (and perhaps a little chilly) with the sound of laughter in his ears, and in his heart the uneasy consciousness that he has no part in the hearty household merriment, is apt to produce in a young man—let alone a young poet—a fierce revolutionary contempt of the world and a yearning for transcendental joys beyond the appreciation of the noisy company downstairs. It was to the Rev. Dr Alison, safest and most soothing of correspondents,



that Thomas Campbell unburdened his sense of discomfort and loneliness "in a lord's house, . . . where I can scarcely discover my own apartment." From his northward window he looks longingly "to the quarter where you"—the beloved Alisons—"are sitting down to evening happiness in such a home as the world scarcely shows, . . . in that blessed mansion where Claude Lorraine might have sat to draw pictures, and Virgil to write poetry." Indeed the young poet is very uncomfortable, though he admits that every one is very civil to him, and that "Lord Minto's politeness only twitches me with the sin of ingratitude for not being happier under his hospitable roof."

Walter Scott was naturally at home in any society. John Leyden would have made himself at home anywhere, quite unconscious of the criticism or amusement he might be exciting; but Campbell, proud, sensitive, and reflective, grew daily less reconciled to his position. A week later his criticisms are more pronounced. "Lord Minto's company is uniformly agreeable, . . . but still this is a lord's house, although *his*; and his time is much employed with strangers, fashionable, proud folk, who have a slang of conversation among themselves as unintelligible to plain sober beings as the cant of gypsies, and probably not so amusing. . . . I declare I have not heard a sentence of either good sense or amusing nonsense from any of our guests except from Lady Malmesbury, who is a shrewd and liberal-minded woman." (Lady Louisa Stuart, that critical Tory lady, spoke once of Lady Malmesbury as a "kettledrum"; but her continuous flow of lively talk must have been of service when a self-conscious young poet was her neighbour during long and formal dinners at Minto.)

Yet, like other shy people, Campbell had impulses of audacious unconventionality. The preceding summer at Minto he had gone to bed one night with "Lochiel's

Warning" simmering in his brain. He awoke with the line—

"And events to come cast their shadow before"<sup>1</sup>

sounding in his ears. Eager to seize the inspiration, he sat up in the darkness and rang till his bell pealed through the sleeping house. When a servant—one of the regiment of footmen who, in his uninspired moments, weighed on his imagination—appeared, he demanded a candle and a cup of tea, though his watch showed that it was only two in the morning! There were instances in his later life when similar impulses overrode his habitual diffidence.

Campbell was not skilled in concealing his feelings. Scott at least was quite aware of the discomfort of his brother bard. Twenty years later, referring to this period, he writes: "Tom Campbell lived at Minto, but it was in a state of dependence that he brooked very ill. He was kindly treated, but would not see it in the right view, and suspected slights and so on where no such things were meant. There was a turn of Savage about Tom — without the blackguardism, — a kind of waywardness of mind and irritability that must have made a man of his genius truly unhappy."

Yet why, one asks, was there this gulf between the positions taken up by these two young guests, Walter Scott and Thomas Campbell, in a household which, if inevitably fashionable and a little ceremonious, held more good sense, experience of life, and unaffected benevolence than any other great house in Scotland? Of the two, Campbell, though the younger man, was the more distinguished poet; his 'Pleasures of Hope,' published three years previously, had made him famous in a day. Accepted judges like Dugald Stewart, Henry Mackenzie, and Dr Alison had hastened to acclaim a new poet; all the world, especially the younger world,

<sup>1</sup> This was later recast into "Coming events cast their shadow before."

had the generous, sententious couplets by heart. At the same date Scott's original poetical output was three or four ballads. At the time of the visit to Minto, Campbell calls him the Tyrtæus of the Edinburgh Light Horse, as if his regimental song were his chief claim to poetic distinction. If University honours count for anything in increasing a young man's self-confidence, Campbell had carried off every possible distinction at Glasgow University, while Scott had slipped through his classes in Edinburgh carrying off no distinction whatever, except an unequalled accumulation of fine irrelevant knowledge.

Nor need Campbell have been sensitive on the score of birth. Scott with his definite feudal theory of society met men of birth on a footing of easy equality, confident in that gentle Border blood which, flowing through smaller lairds and even tenant farmers, was yet easily traced and zealously prized. Reviewing his own career at the end of life, while admitting that his literary distinction had introduced him into more exalted circles than would have been his in the natural order of things, he denied that it had in any way changed his position. He was by birth a Scottish gentleman, a Scottish gentleman he remained: it was with this simple credential that he entered society at every point of his career. Campbell's birth was not unequal to Scott's. His ancestors were Highland lairds, and though the family house of Kirnan was standing roofless and a kinsman of another name possessed the lands, he was accustomed to hear his proud Highland mother bid tradesmen address the goods sent to her house or her flat in Glasgow to Mrs Campbell of Kirnan. Part of his self-consciousness at Minto was, doubtless, due to the fact that he insisted on feeling himself dependent because of certain secretarial duties which Lord Minto had invented to make it easy for the poet to be his guest for prolonged periods. Moreover, he was a Celt

by blood, a poet in his craving for recognition, a scholar in shy, recluse habits. He knew little of the world, and had an early intimate acquaintance with the restrictions of poverty and what youth fancies and feels to be her humiliations.

The descent and history of Thomas Campbell are as characteristic of the West of Scotland as those of the Scott family are characteristic of Edinburgh and the Eastern Border. All through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the road to fortune lay in the east of Scotland through Edinburgh and the law. Look through a list of Judges and Lords Advocate, and you will find that most of their titles come from lands in the Lothians or in the Border counties. In the West of Scotland, Glasgow and trade with the West Indies and Virginia offered the best chances to such of the sons of Highland lairds as had not, through the patronage of their chiefs, obtained commissions in the army. The father of Thomas Campbell, the third son of the last laird of Kirnan, had been a prosperous merchant in Glasgow, trading with Virginia and enjoying considerable prosperity till the war with America stopped his business and swept away his accumulated capital.

When in 1777 Thomas Campbell was born his father was an old man, his mother an anxious, harassed woman, the fortunes of the house bankrupt. In the 'Pleasures of Hope' is the picture of just such a careworn couple, concentrating all their hopes and wishes on the future of their children. One may smile at the image of "Hybla sweets" and "bloomy vines" being absent from the narrow, crowded home in Glasgow, but the whole passage is drawn from the experience—is, indeed, the one absorbing experience—of Campbell's youth. The situation has been repeated again and again in Scottish families of small means and steady ambitions. The upper flat, the hurried meals, the eager parental questioning on the boy's return from school, the young



face, flushed and exultant, or else blanched and despondent, the public occasions, the piled-up prizes—and then the relentless question at what price the triumph has been won.

In Campbell's case the motives were the purest: affection as much as ambition made the parents urgent, affection as much as vanity made the son responsive. But none the less he had to pay for the result during all his later life in sleepless nights and in fits of despondency alternating with fits of nervous excitability. There was little in this young life, divided between the cares of home and the competitions of the class-room, to form and feed the future poet. One thinks of Scott lying all the summer day under the plane-tree with Percy's 'Reliques,' or of Wordsworth's long, vacant, happy days on Esthwaite Lake, and then the reason seems plain why, after exhausting his first inspiration, Campbell was so much at a loss for material for poetry. Scott and Wordsworth have reached the universal heart and touched the universal imagination, partly because they so entirely understood and loved the dear country-sides that knew their youth. All through their lives and in their finest work they drew constantly on the store of experience and emotions laid up in early years. One short period there was indeed in Campbell's life when special experiences were his, experiences which inspired the four lyrics which are his claim on posterity. He had spent a summer in Mull, but Nature had no secret voice for this her sophisticated child; he had been several times in love, but love had only produced conventional lyrics; but in the year 1800, when he was in Germany, he had come in contact with actual war. From the ramparts of Ratisbon, close to the Scottish monastery, he "had heard the sound of distant artillery, and had seen the flashing of carbines in the neighbouring wood where the French and Austrian Rothmantels skirmished in small parties." Later on he witnessed the sad procession of



dead and dying being carried past. That is why one feels both in "Hohenlinden" and in the "Soldier's Dream" that the poet has been there himself and seen with bodily eyes what he has described better than any one else. The closing of the foreign ports to English ships, the sailing of the English fleet for Copenhagen, made the Continent unsafe for English travellers, and Campbell hurried home with the rest. In the excitement of seeing his native land under such circumstances, he wrote "Ye Mariners of England." The song has become to us a national pæan: it is singular to find by whom and under what circumstances it was first read in Campbell's native land.

Nowhere was the reaction from Liberal ideas more headlong than in Edinburgh: suspicion mounting to panic had taken possession of those in authority. At Ratisbon Campbell had made acquaintance with the French General Moreau; at Hamburg he had been familiar with a party of Irish political exiles; Donovan, the Irish rebel, had by chance left Germany on the same ship. Here was obviously a case for severe scrutiny. John Clerk of Eldin, being Sheriff of Edinburgh, had reluctantly to submit Campbell to a rigorous examination. The poet's papers had been confiscated. As the contents met his eye the reassured sheriff muttered angrily, "This comes of trusting a Hamburg spy"; then, unbending, he added good-humouredly, "Mr Campbell, this is a wet evening, what do you say to our having a bottle of wine during the examination of your *treasonable* papers?" Among the treasonable papers was "Ye Mariners of England"! Campbell was quite aware of his good fortune in falling into the hands of John Clerk, a Whig, a man of independent judgment, and the friend of Harry Erskine, for he carried in fiery memory a week of his boyhood when he walked from Glasgow to Edinburgh to attend the trial of Gerald and Muir, and had brought back such a sickening sense of the impotence of truth to maintain itself against hostile author-

ity as had darkened the world for him for months. From this he dated his passion for Liberty and almost painful sympathy with the oppressed.

Scott's relations to Campbell were more cordial than intimate. Campbell's name occurs rarely in Lockhart, but when Scott mentions him at all it is with kindness and admiration. Leyden was the first link between them. He was intimate with Campbell in the year when the 'Pleasures of Hope' was published. The first assurance the anxious poet had of the success of his poem was Leyden rushing in to tell him in his generous way that he had overheard Dr Gregory in Creech's shop saying of the 'Pleasures of Hope,' "It is all beautiful, and some passages are absolutely sublime." "No one," said Campbell, "can ever know how my heart beat with joy then." A little later and Leyden and Campbell were fiercely at variance, but not before Leyden had done Campbell the inestimable service of introducing him to Scott. It was shortly before Leyden's departure for India that Scott found himself in a stage-coach with Campbell, the only other passenger. To beguile the time they repeated poetry to one another. Scott asked Campbell for something of his own. He replied that there was one thing that he had never printed, "full of drums and trumpets and blunderbusses and thunder, and that he did not know if there was any good in it." He then repeated "Hohenlinden." When he had finished Scott broke in with, "But do you know that's devilish fine. Why! it's the finest thing you ever wrote, and must be printed." Scott in those days had only to hear a poem once to have it by heart. He took the earliest opportunity of sharing the prize with Leyden. Leyden could enjoy a hearty antipathy but he could not resist poetry. "Dash it, man, tell the fellow that I hate him; but, dash him, he has written the finest verses that have been published these fifty years." Faithfully as one of Homer's messengers Scott did his errand, and had for answer, "Tell Leyden

that I detest him, but I know the value of his critical approbation."

There was perhaps between the two men less a quarrel than an antagonism in the blood. In 1803 Leyden was in London on his way to India, but even the thought that half the world was soon to divide them could not stop Campbell's vicious but rather humorous complaint: "London has been visited in one month by John Leyden and the Influenza. . . . They are both raging with great violence. . . . The latter complaint has confined Telford and myself for a week or so; the former has attacked us several times."

Yet Leyden, with all his headlong egotism, by sheer intellectual vivacity and lack of self-consciousness fell far more happily into the humour of polished society than Campbell with his anxious desire to shine. We remember, almost with a sense of personal gratitude, how George Ellis received Leyden on his own terms, enjoying the peculiarities as much as he loved the worth of the man.

Campbell had the most favourable of introductions. We have from an eyewitness, a Dr Irving, an account of a remarkable party at Longman's, the publisher, in 1803. The guests were Walter Scott, Humphry Davy, George Ellis, Thomas Young, and Thomas Campbell. "Scott had not then attained the meridian height of his reputation, but he was always conspicuous for his social powers and strong, practical sense. On this occasion he was full of good-humour and had many stories to tell; Ellis, possessing an ample fund of elegant literature, was a model of all that was easy and pleasant in private society; Young, one of the most remarkable men of the age, alike distinguished in science and erudition; Davy, who was so great in his own department, seemed willing to talk in an easy and unpretending strain on any topic that was discussed." Unfortunately Campbell still retained the habit which Scott tells us all young men

inevitably caught at the Scottish Universities, the habit namely of insistent argument, and of talking for victory. "He was too ambitious to shine," continues Dr Irving, "nor was he successful in any of his attempts. He was inclined to debate on the subject of Homer, Scott was silent on the subject of Greek poetry, Davy made such remarks as occurred to him as a man of sense with no special knowledge of the matter, but Young met Campbell with equal decision and coolness, and with arguments drawn from Wolf's *Prolegomena*. Campbell began to wax rather too earnest,—but finding that he did not attract all the attention to which he felt himself entitled, he started from his seat at an early hour, and quitted the room with a very hasty step."

The doors of Holland House, and of other patrons, stood open to Campbell as they did to Moore. Society when it opens its doors to men of genius extracts its entrance fee. Moore paid it gladly in music, in wit, in the deftest skill in playing the social game. He identified himself so single-mindedly with his company that grace supplied the place of self-respect. All this was impossible to Campbell: he lacked the lighter, he possessed the nobler qualities; his individuality was too exacting to be easy in ordinary society, let alone the society of the great.

Meanwhile the claims of livelihood had to be met, and not of livelihood only, but of household expenditure. There is in the second part of the 'Pleasures of Hope' a pleasing if rather elaborate picture of the home-to-be which haunted the young poet's fancy:—

"Some cottage home, from towns and toil remote,  
Where love and lore may claim alternate hours,  
With Peace embosomed in Idalian bowers!  
Remote from busy life's bewildered way,  
O'er all his heart shall Taste and Beauty sway."

Alas! all his life the poet of Hope was to have intimate acquaintance with Disappointment. "Lore" in



the little "Idalian bower" at Sydenham had to sell itself to the booksellers in daily tasks of anonymous writing. "Taste" in the young couple's furnishing takes the form of a best parlour "with a fashionable red carpet crossed with black, with yellow-cushioned chairs and bell-rope and a steel grate." And Peace, alack! is represented by such violent domestic "treasures" as desolated the hearth of Dora and David Copperfield. There is a letter to Scott which reads curiously like a passage from Dickens, only that the harassed poet misses the humour, though not the dismay, of the situation.

Scott had sent him a presentation copy of the 'Lay,' but though Campbell's thanks are hearty ("I shall hand it down to my boy," he writes; ". . . it will teach him to keep good company since his father did not walk in his youth with little men"), he pleads that his nerves are so shaken with a recent encounter with an intoxicated cook, followed by an adventure—largely imaginary—with a footpad on the common, that he can write of nothing but these domestic tempests. In his next letter, however, he sends Scott the first draught of his finest lyric "The Battle of the Baltic."

Increasing expenditure in the young household with decreasing returns from a close-fisted publisher were troubling Campbell at the time of writing to Scott. High-spirited, and brought up with strict views of pecuniary obligation, it cost him a painful effort to borrow money, even with the certainty of being able to repay it in a given time. Instinctively men in such straits turn for help to those in like condition,—men who may require similar aid to-morrow. But Campbell, even though he imagined Scott's prosperity to be greater than it was, trusted rather to the brotherly kindness, the forwardness to help, the perfect reserve which all less fortunate men found in Scott. But till the reply came to the reluctant request for the loan of £50, Campbell was uneasy and



ashamed. Scott's letter not only brought relief, it put new heart into Campbell. "I really will never forget the impression I felt on reading your letter, . . . your style and manner of writing are so full of confidence and unaffected kindness as to entirely relieve me. I am infinitely encouraged by what you say of your own fortune; I hold your progress before me as a comfortable encouragement. . . . I delight to think of your happiness."

Scott always kept a watchful eye on his friends' fortune, even of such as were at a distance. When he heard that Campbell was lecturing in London, he hoped that he would read with fire and "not attempt to correct his brogue." The success of these lectures in 1816 suggested to Scott a scheme for bringing Campbell to Edinburgh, and having a chair of rhetoric in the University accommodated for his service—it being a mere sinecure in the hands of the actual occupier. With friendly zeal he lays out his plan and pledges his own influence with the Town Council; but either the pecuniary prospect was too uncertain, or Campbell, like many another expatriated Scot, was reluctant to return to the climate and prejudices of his native land. The scheme came to nothing.

From first to last Campbell had a constant fight for day and way. Unpractical he was about money in the highest degree—at one time keeping twisted bank-notes of the value of several hundred pounds in his Turkey slippers in his wardrobe. But let it be said at once he "hated debt with the bitterness of death"; he never diminished his support of his kindred, and, as soon as there was a gleam of prosperity, spent all superfluity in charitable gifts.

Living retired at Sydenham, absorbed in lectures, anthologies, compilations, and the editing of the 'Monthly Magazine,' Campbell had few opportunities of meeting Scott. Their meeting-point was at Hampstead, in the

house of John Richardson, a name pleasant to welcome alike in Lockhart and in the biography of Campbell. He had been Campbell's intimate friend in Edinburgh, an enthusiast for his poetry, and an invaluable ally in dealing with publishers and other practical problems. What his first connection was with Scott we are not told,—probably it dated from earliest days, possibly from hereditary family friendship, for the first reference in Lockhart describes Richardson's zeal on behalf of Thomas Scott when his judicial sinecure was being questioned in the House of Lords. Richardson was a Whig, as proud of Rullion Green and the torture of the thumbkins to which his ancestors had been subjected, as Scott of Wat of Harden and The Feast of Spurs. Brought up to the Scots law, Richardson had migrated to London, and held evidently some legal position of profit and importance. When he settled at Hampstead Scott wrote of him affectionately to Joanna Baillie: "Johnnie Richardson is as good, honourable, kind-hearted a little fellow as lives in the world, with a pretty taste for poetry which he has wisely kept under subjection to the occupation of drawing briefs and revising conveyances." With Scott Richardson was on a footing of easy intimacy. We find him in 1810 a guest at Ashestiel, straining Tom Purdie's politeness and sense of hospitality by the success of his fishing. He was among the few who shared the secret of the authorship of the novels from the beginning. When both were elderly men they were neighbours on Tweedside, for Richardson had prospered in the world and Scott had the delight of helping him to choose the estate of Kirklands on the Teviot, and of giving advice as to planting and laying out of lands. When unable to use it himself he passed on to Richardson the pruning-knife, as familiar to his hand as his pen. When he was lying speechless and only half-conscious at Lockhart's house after his return from Italy, this kind old friend came to see him, and Scott, rousing himself from torpor, asked him

concerning the growth of his woods. There is an affecting incident recorded in Richardson's diary which convinces one that he was a safe silent man, as well as a sensible and sympathetic one. In the autumn of 1826 he was a guest at Abbotsford. "The house was full of company on one of the evenings of my stay. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and I walked out with Sir Walter to the terrace towards the Tweed. The thriving holly hedge was glistening in the moonbeams and the library which we had left was gay with brilliant light and high and happy guests,—everything contributed to inspire me with admiration for Sir Walter's efforts and success and merited station and happiness, and I could not refrain from expressing that sentiment. I dare say I did so as fervently as I did it sincerely: I was thunder-struck when, instead of responsive acquiescence, he uttered a deep sigh and said, 'I wish to God I had the means of providing adequately for poor Anne.' Knowing that his life was insured, I observed that that fund was ample. He made no explanation and was silent; but I could not but feel, when his misfortunes were soon after disclosed, what a pang I must have inflicted,—the fund I had alluded to and all he had being absorbed in his overwhelming pecuniary ruin."

Being the man he was, one can understand how valuable a friend John Richardson was to Campbell, whose affairs were often involved, and whose excitable and sensitive nature required steadiness and indulgence in his friends.

There is a merry page in Richardson's diary describing a visit he and Scott and James Ballantyne paid to Campbell in 1806. "We went out to dine at Sydenham, having first procured beds for ourselves at The Greyhound in the village. Campbell had recently composed his 'Turkish Lady,' of which he was very full. It contains eleven stanzas. He repeated it to us before dinner, when Scott was much pleased with it, and he

asked him after dinner to recite it again. At nine we left the poet and adjourned to The Greyhound, where we had beef-steaks for supper and a liberal allowance of brandy punch. We had a very merry party: Ballantyne sang all Scott's favourite songs, in several of which and the choruses Scott and I joined. I don't recollect on any other occasion to have heard Sir Walter attempt to sing. (The feat was indeed as rare with Scott as with his hero, Frank Osbaldistone, and only performed under the same conditions.) After breakfasting with the poet we walked over to Camberwell, Tom accompanying us. The two poets recited to each other during all the walk, and at Camberwell we resorted to the pot-house at which the Camberwell coaches stopped, and had bread-and-cheese and porter, and there, to the amazement of us all, Scott repeated the whole of the 'Turkish Lady' without a fault. It was a surprising effort of memory after the discipline (!) of the night before."

This poem of the "Turkish Lady" ran in Scott's mind. In June 1826 he quotes it in the *Journal*. He was in his lodgings in St David Street, working heavily at 'Napoleon'; the day had been stifling, but the evening was pleasant, and Scott had gone out for a walk, repeating to himself—

"Day its sultry fires had wasted,  
Calm and cool the moonbeams rose;  
Even a captive's bosom tasted  
Half oblivion of his woes."

The verse set Scott ruminating, and he writes: "I often wonder how Tom Campbell, with so much real genius, has not maintained a greater figure in the public eye than he has done of late. . . . The author not only of the 'Pleasures of Hope,' but of 'Hohenlinden,' 'Lochiel,' &c., should have been at the very top of the tree. Somehow he wants audacity, fears the public,

and, what is worse, fears the shadow of his own reputation. . . . Yet Tom Campbell ought to have done a great deal more. His youthful promise was great."

Scott would not have wondered if he had known in detail Campbell's domestic sorrows, the wearing anxieties, the wrecking of all his hopes.

The story can be told shortly and poignantly in a little anecdote set down by a friend of the poet, a Welshman. He was entertaining Campbell with an account of the Welsh, and dwelt on their curious habit, common also to the Irish, of recording their emotions and experiences, or indeed matters of fact, in triads. As a striking instance of this he told of an old Welsh harper celebrated for his skill on the triple-stringed Welsh harp. Once, late on a frosty winter night, a traveller, crossing a lonely heath, saw the old man of eighty leaning on his staff, his plaid hanging loose about him, his white hair streaming in the wind. "Griffith," cried the traveller, "what can have brought you at such an hour to this dreary place?" The old man recounted his woes in the form of a Welsh triad: "My wife is dead, my son is mad, my harp is unstrung."

The words shot through Campbell's heart. They exactly reflected the sorrows of his own desolate home; he bowed his head on his hands and cried like a child.



## C R A B B E.

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“READ me some amusing thing—read me a bit of Crabbe.” So spoke Scott in one of the lucid and almost cheerful intervals that occurred a week or two before his death.

The touch of his native earth had seemed for a moment to restore his serenity. He was sitting in his chair within the green shade by the wall of the court, looking out on familiar objects, and his mind, lightened and exhilarated, demanded something to occupy without taxing its attention. Crabbe, more than any other poet of his time, appealed to Scott when he wanted merely to be entertained; he might similarly appeal to any one. He has the first great requisites in a story-teller: he is always interesting, always clear, always true to fact. The reader's imagination, roused by the direct introduction of characters and situation, follows with pleased attention the vivid detail of quite everyday circumstance, looks out with amusement for the exquisite, calculated absurdity of such lines as—

“And there he fixed his principles and pew,”

and then, all at once, just as in real life, finds himself, amid dull and sordid conditions, touching the very quick of human tragedy.

It was so in the volume that Lockhart took down by chance from the library shelf. The passage was

from 'The Borough,' and describes the life of the strolling players, their shiftless, thriftless merriment amid squalor and excess; the struggle of failing powers amid envy and poverty and cares; the inevitable blank of old age following on success and failure alike. Scott had known the passage by heart, but that with so much else had vanished from his mind; he listened as if to something new. "Capital, excellent, very good! Crabbe has lost nothing." Scott's memory was gone, understanding flickered, but kindness remained. The satire brought to his mind his actor friend, Daniel Terry—Terry who was where neither satire nor managerial cares nor bankruptcy could touch him any more.

"I went on," writes Lockhart, "with the poet's terrible sarcasms upon the theatrical life, and he listened eagerly, muttering, 'Honest Dan!'—'Dan won't like this.' At length I reached the lines—

'Sad, happy race! soon raised and soon depressed,  
Your days all passed in jeopardy and jest:  
Poor without prudence, with afflictions vain,  
Not warned by misery, nor enriched by gain.'

'Shut the book,' said Sir Walter, 'I can't stand more of it. It will touch Terry to the very quick.'

When Crabbe goes—as he so often does—to the quick, there is nothing to soften the pain, no background of Nature, calm and beneficent as in Wordsworth, no "soothing thoughts that spring out of human suffering." Crabbe will not allow us the tears that blur our vision and take the sting from pain when he forces us to look on lives of failure and disappointment, ending in cold and darkness and neglect. He never calls the consolations of religion into question, but he knows from hard experience that lives go out into darkness with no softening ray of hope and reconciliation: he had been a country apothecary.

Crabbe was the last book Sir Walter listened to.

There were no books on his shelves with which he was more familiar, none more frequently read aloud in the family circle. He remembered vividly his first acquaintance with the poems. He was a boy of eighteen, spending some weeks at an old country house—Simprin probably, or Abbotrule—in the winter of 1789. It was a time of heavy snow, and searching among such books as the house contained, he came upon an odd volume of Dodsley's 'Annual Register.' There, among vapid descriptive pieces and other polite poetry of the age, were long extracts from two poems called "The Library" and "The Village." The metre was the heroic couplet, to which English poetry had been wedded for a century; the manner was the pointed antithetical manner of Pope; but the subject-matter was as unusual in literature as it is and has been common and universal and unchanging in human life. Want and hunger, dumb rage or dull patience, toil without hope, idleness without pleasure,—these have lain at all times in the depths of human society, but only at intervals have they forced themselves, fiercely but ineffectually, into the stream of history in some servile war, some Jacquerie, some agrarian riot, once—an appalling revelation—in the French Revolution. Still more rarely has this dumb cruel suffering of the residuum obtruded itself into literature,—except, indeed, into mediæval literature, as in 'Piers Plowman' and in Sir David Lyndsay's 'Satire of the Three Estates,' where the poor man publishes his wrongs. Once, in an often-quoted passage, it forced itself, a rude reality, into the exquisite landscape—green wood and daisied meadow—of the Provençal tale. Aucassin, seeking for his lady down an old grass-grown road, meets with the fell figure of a peasant, tall, black as charcoal, 'with big yellow teeth, wearing shoes of bull's-hide bound with thongs of bark. He tells how his old mother has had her bed sold under her and lies on the straw, while he seeks weariedly his straying ox.

Again, in the age of Louis XIV., La Fontaine, the satirist of courts and society, meets a kindred figure in the forest, bending under the weight of faggots and of age, and groaning for death to relieve his pains. And now, in the aged pauper of Crabbe's "Village," we find the same dumb rage, the same sullen acquiescence as in the French peasants of the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries.

"Oft may you see him when he tends the sheep,  
His winter charge, beneath the hillock weep;  
Oft hear him murmur to the winds that blow  
O'er his white locks and bury them in snow,  
When, roused by rage, and muttering in the morn,  
He mends the broken hedge with icy thorn."

Such were the verses which by Burke's influence had been quoted in Dodsley's 'Register.' They took possession of Scott. He tried to procure the two published poems; but books were not easily to be had in Edinburgh, so he contented himself by learning the quoted passages by heart. They included the terrible description of the Workhouse which, falling into Wordsworth's hands at this time, made such an impression on him that he too committed them to memory.

In narrating to Crabbe his first acquaintance with his poems, Scott writes: "The verses must have felt themselves very strangely lodged in company with ghost-stories, Border riding ballads, scraps of old plays, and all the miscellaneous stuff which a strong appetite for reading had assembled in the head of a lad of eighteen."

It was the "riding ballads," "the scraps of old plays," that were forming and feeding the genius of Scott. When he came to write himself, it was first in ballad form, then in what he jestingly called a "light-horseman kind of metre," but with the spirit and swing of the riding ballad. If he ever reflected on his own art he would probably have claimed to be the successor of the earlier

minstrels, to have merely extended the ballads into narrative poems. But in literary taste and judgment he never really broke with the eighteenth century. The metre of Crabbe was the measure of the poetry he had been brought up on, and he asked for no richer music. He certainly did not go the length of Byron, who considered Pope's method so perfect that he affected to regard his own and other men's departure from it as aberrations. But he agreed with Byron in placing Johnson's "Vanity of Human Wishes" at the top of English poetry, and he devoted part of his best working years to editing Dryden and Swift.

After a silence of twenty years Crabbe reprinted the earlier poems, with the addition of "The Parish Register," and Scott afterwards told him that he had felt it "a triumph to my own immature taste to find I had anticipated the applause of the learned and the critical."

In the meantime, shortly after the publication of 'The Lay of the last Minstrel,' the Rev. Mr Crabbe saw the volume on a bookseller's counter in Ipswich, and was so riveted that he read it nearly through standing in the shop, observing, "A new and a great poet has appeared." The success of his third publication, 'The Borough,' in 1809, encouraged even this modest author to claim the freemasonry that exists or should exist between contemporary poets. He sent Scott a copy of his book, and this was the beginning of a charming correspondence, modest and *naïf* on the part of Crabbe, kind and humorous and complimentary on the part of Scott. Crabbe is perplexed by Scott's describing himself as a "clerk":<sup>1</sup> a "clerk in holy orders" he puts out of the question; the Aldborough conception of a clerk, the clerk of commerce, he cannot associate with his correspondent's personality. He concludes that it must be "something vastly more than I can understand." He also avows an eager desire to read the history of celebrated cases,—a taste Scott shared so strongly that

<sup>1</sup> Clerk of Session, an office in Scots Law.



he once thought of editing a volume of *causes célèbres*. Scott congratulates Crabbe on a style that appealed alike to the uninitiated and the connoisseur, adding—“Our old friend Horace knew what he was saying when he dedicated his ode ‘*Virginibus puerisque*.’”

Crabbe had an appreciative audience of girls and boys in 39 Castle Street. “None of my little folk, about whose taste and principles I may be supposed to be naturally solicitous, have ever read any of my own poems, while yours have been our regular evening amusement.” In 1809 Sophia “begins to read well and enter into the humour and sentiment of Mr Crabbe’s poems.” By 1812 the whole family had adopted Crabbe as their favourite reading. Scott, writing to thank the author for a copy of the *Tales*, writes, “My original copy suffers as much from its general popularity among my young people as a popular candidate from the hugs and embraces of his democratical admirers.” One can easily imagine those excellent children, prosaic but with a sense of humour, revelling in such passages as this, where a girl describes her grandmother returning from a card-party accompanied by her tiny domestic:—

“Methinks I see her with her pigmy light  
 Precede her mistress on a moonless night,  
 From the small lantern throwing through the street  
 The dimmed effulgence at her lady’s feet,  
 What time she went to prove her well-known skill  
 With rival friends at their beloved quadrille.  
 ‘And how’s your pain?’ inquired the gentle maid  
 (For that was asking if with luck she played),  
 And this she answered as the cards decreed :  
 ‘Oh, Biddy ! ask not—very bad indeed !’  
 Or, in more cheerful tone from spirit light,  
 ‘Oh, thank you, Biddy, pretty well to-night.’”

Or this picture of the auction after the grandmother’s death—

“Strange people came, they searched the house around,  
 And, vulgar wretches, sold whate’er they found.  
 . . . . .

The costly silk, the tabby, the brocade,  
 The very garment for the wedding made,  
 Were brought to sale with many a jest thereon.  
 'Going!—a bridal-dress—for—going. Gone!'—  
 That ring, dear pledge of early love and true,  
 That to the wedded finger almost grew,  
 Was sold for six and tenpence to a Jew!"—

and this culmination of the ridiculous, when the forsaken orphan has accompanied the kind-hearted Biddy to her squalid home:—

"At night we prayed,—I dare not say a word  
 Of our devotion, it was so absurd!"—

When Scott read "The Patron" to his children he could hardly help saying "That's me" when he read of the lad whom feeble health had separated from his comrades and thrown on the society of books,—

"Legends of love, with tales of halls and bowers,  
 Choice of rare songs, and garlands of choice flowers,  
 And all the hungry mind without a choice devours."

But the vivid narrative, the diverting incident, the quaint or absurd characters which appealed to the young people, were not what Scott valued in Crabbe. Writing to Lady Abercorn in 1820, after the publication of the 'Tales of the Hall,' he says: "I think if Crabbe had cultivated the sublime and the pathetic instead of the satirical cast of poetry, he must have stood very high (as indeed he does at anyrate) on the list of British poets." Perhaps the "sublime" and "pathetic" passages in Crabbe are the more telling from the flat circumstantial level from which they start. Scott particularly admired "Sir Eustace Grey," that strange imaginative picture of madness, where Crabbe is as little bound by his usual mannerisms as his maniac by the laws of time and space. In the same volume was another of Scott's favourites,

“The Hall of Justice.” This tells a story of a young life so hopelessly wrecked, of a wrong so awful, that even the magistrate, nay! even Crabbe himself, appeals, softened and awestruck, to Almighty God,—

“For though seduced and led astray,  
Thou’st travelled far and wandered long;  
Thy God hath seen thee all the way,  
And all the turns that led thee wrong.”

As an instance of “the pathetic” in Crabbe, no story is more poignant than that of “Charles, the patronised Lad,” in the ‘Tales of the Hall.’ Acquainted with all forms of sordid misery, it was the distress of genius—or of what imagined itself genius,—ambitious and starving, that came most closely home to Crabbe. (But for the generous interposition of Burke it might easily have been his own fate.)

The story tells of an unfortunate youth, deluded and exalted from his natural sphere by an irresponsible patron, who struggles to make his way as an artist, and dies at last, starved and heartbroken, in a workhouse.

“Hither, it seemed, the fainting man was brought,  
And without food—it was no longer sought.

. . . . .

Here brought, some kind attendant he addressed,  
And sought some trifles which he yet possessed—

. . . . .

A better coat, less pieced; some linen neat,  
Not whole; and papers, many a valued sheet.  
Designs and drawings: these, by his desire,  
Were placed before him at the chamber fire,  
And while the wondering people stood to gaze  
He, one by one, committed to the blaze  
Smiling in spleen: *but one he held awhile*  
*And gave it to the flames, and did not smile.”*

One is thankful to Crabbe for vouchsafing us a softening touch. At the last Charles is found by

“ an early friend,  
 One, only one, who could on him attend,  
 To give and take a look.

. . . . .  
 And so there came a softness to his mind,  
 And he forgave the usage of mankind.”

Byron did Crabbe no more than justice when he called him

“ Nature’s sternest painter and her best.”

Irreclaimably, instinctively romantic as Scott was, one can understand the attraction that Crabbe’s relentless realism had for him. Scott had the romantic imagination that, from a hint, can reconstruct a whole unfamiliar world—life in a mediæval castle, human nature in helm and hauberk. But he could also—and it is his finer gift—feel the romance, the picturesqueness, the potential horror or heroism in the homespun men and women he had met with in the course of his life. The Scottish novels which approach his own time are more inimitably and uniquely Scott, than the dear and delightful tales of chivalry. It was not for nothing that Scott was a lawyer, and a lawyer in a country and epoch where crime was often desperate and dramatic. Haydon noticed Scott’s predilection for anecdotes where crime is relieved or intensified by touches of sardonic humour. It is especially when he deals with crime and desperadoes that we have firm, picturesque touches of realism in the novels, such as must have appealed to Crabbe.

It is not surprising to learn that Crabbe had a special interest in the ‘Heart of Mid-Lothian,’ and chose to be taken to see Muschat’s Cairn on the one walk he had with Scott in Edinburgh: there are arresting touches of realism in the crazy utterances of Madge Wildfire. But the most sustained instance of this quality in Scott is the story of Nanty Ewart,—as admirable a piece of realism as Wandering Willie’s tale is admirable as romance.

“But my father might have been the wiser man, had he kept me at home, when he sent me at nineteen to study Divinity at the head of the highest stair in the Covenant Close. It was a cursed mistake in the old gentleman. What though Mrs Cantrips of Kittlebasket was our cousin five times removed, and took me on that account to board and lodging at six shillings, instead of seven shillings, a-week? It was a d——d bad saving, as the case proved. . . . Well, sir!—Gad, I can scarce get on with my story—it sticks in my throat—must take a trifle to wash it down. Well, this dame had a daughter—Jess Cantrips, a black-eyed, bouncing wench,—and, as the devil would have it, there was the d——d five-story stair—her foot was never from it, whether I went out or came home from the Divinity Hall. I would have eschewed her, sir—I would, on my soul, for I was as innocent a lad as ever came from Lammermuir; but there was no possibility of escape, retreat, or flight, unless I could have got a pair of wings, or made use of a ladder seven stories high, to scale the window of my attic. It signifies little talking—you may suppose how all this was to end—I would have married the girl, and taken my chance—I would, by Heaven! for she was a pretty girl, and a good girl, till she and I met; but you know the old song, ‘Kirk would not let us be.’”

The next stage of this sorry tale might have happened at Aldborough, and it might have been told in Crabbe's sober verse how the old lady was sold up by her landlord—“a haberdasher, with a heart as rotten as the muslin wares he dealt in”—and at the end of a month in the workhouse was “as dead as her friends could desire,” while her daughter, “bouncing Jess Cantrips,” had meanwhile been transported to the Plantations for night-walking and pocket-picking.

But here the story takes to the high seas and to the deck of a buccaneering vessel, and Scott is at home in a world of romantic adventure whither Crabbe never follows him.

The visit Crabbe paid Scott in August 1822 was one of the quaintest episodes in Scott's life, and certainly the most exciting in Crabbe's.

The two poets had met a couple of years earlier in that literary house of call, Mr Murray's back shop, and



Scott had eagerly pressed Crabbe to visit him on Tweed-side. Unfortunately the time Crabbe chose for his visit collided with that pasteboard pageantry the visit of George IV. to Holyrood. It is unfortunate; for it would have been pleasant to imagine the gentle, cheerful old gentleman at Abbotsford dining with Willie Laidlaw and marvelling at James Hogg. Still, Crabbe could enjoy distractions the most foreign to his habits. The bland acquiescence which took him to Newmarket races in a tandem driven by his undergraduate son John, sustained him when he entered Scott's dining-room and saw a group of tall men, fully armed, clad in a parti-coloured garb that left their knees exposed, and talking a language the very existence of which he had never suspected! French seemed to both sides the only medium between these splendid barbarians and one whose neat black breeches, silver buckles, and delicate face suggested a Catholic *abbé* of the old *régime*.

When, on Scott's entrance, the misunderstanding ended in laughter, Crabbe sat down with the pleased bewilderment of a child who should have found his way into a fairy-tale. So caught was he by the prevailing spirit that he writes, "I thought it an honour that Glengarry even took notice of me"—a view of the matter that would without doubt commend itself to Glengarry.

Crabbe was habitually silent in company, and Scott could not be certain that he was enjoying his visit, for, with all his gentleness, there was a satiric quality in his quiet observant manner. Certainly there were incidents that appealed to satiric humour—or indeed to any sense of humour. One is historic.

Scott was out receiving the King at the pier of Leith when Crabbe arrived. By-and-by the belated host hurried in, wet, apologetic, cordial; embraced his guest, flung himself back in his chair, and—a shivering of glass, a shriek, terror of the family, laughing explanations, and a rueful waste of romantic loyalty!

As we know, Scott's time was divided between exhausting gaieties at Holyrood and the darkened room where William Erskine lay dying. It so turned out that he had to go straight from the funeral to some festivity at Holyrood. "As we halted in Castle Street," writes Lockhart, "Mr Crabbe's mild thoughtful face appeared at the window, and Scott said on leaving me, 'Now for what our excellent old friend there puts down as the crowning curse of his poor players in 'The Borough':—

'To hide in rant the heartache of the night.'"

One result of Scott's preoccupation was that Crabbe was handed over to Lockhart and Sophia to be entertained. There is no mistaking the tone in which Lockhart alludes to Scott's friends. Good taste ensures their all being mentioned with respect, but of few does he speak with so much personal warmth as of Crabbe. "Scott's family," he writes, "had from infancy been taught to reverence Crabbe's genius, and they now saw enough of him to make them think of him ever afterwards with tender affection."

He accompanied Crabbe and Scott on their one satisfactory walk under Arthur's Seat.

"The hour spent at Muschat's Cairn, in the course of which the fine old man gave us some most touching anecdotes of his early struggles, was a truly delightful contrast to the bustle and worry of miscellaneous society which consumed so many of his few hours in Scotland."

Lockhart could not disguise his wearied distaste for the royal visit.

## MOORE.

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IT was while walking up the Rhymer's Glen with Sir Walter Scott in the twilight of an October afternoon that Thomas Moore had one of those illuminating flashes of self-knowledge which redeem a thousand frivolous entries recording dinner engagements and social anecdote. He was seeing the life at Abbotsford in its sunniest aspect—or *apparently* its sunniest aspect, for it was the autumn of 1825, and the clouds were already gathering thick which were to break in disaster in the following January. It was late in the season, the house was free of the usual throng of guests, and, being particularly drawn to the warm-hearted, unaffected Irishman, Scott was doing the honours of the country with more than his usual enjoyment. The previous day had been that special trial of good fellowship, a wet day in the country; but the hours after breakfast had been happily spent over Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe's humorous etchings hanging in the breakfast-room, and with the first break in the clouds Scott had insisted on taking his friend out for a walk—he himself refusing to put on a greatcoat. Chiefswood was deserted, the Lockharts being unfortunately absent in Edinburgh, but Scott had other neighbours with whom he liked to share especially delightful guests; besides, he wished to ask Willie Laidlaw to walk over and dine that evening. At

Kaeside the rain came on again, and the two poets were forced to sit some time. It was all new to Moore, who, whether in Ireland or England, had little intimacy with Mother Earth and those who live near to her heart. "The cottage and the mistress were very homely," he notes; but at least he had the perception to see that "the man himself, with his broad Scotch dialect, showed the quiet self-possession of a man of sense."

Meantime Scott, in all his glory, was enumerating the names of thirty places, famous in Scottish song, to be seen from a neighbouring hill, Willie Laidlaw playing a silent accompaniment of intense appreciation of the familiar tale. At dinner there were more old friends, of course Sir Adam Fergusson and his lady from Gattonside House, and Scott drawing out Sir Adam—only too willing to be drawn—to tell all his old campaigning stories, and this leading to anecdotes of the Duke of Wellington. Then—as apparently happened often at Abbotsford—the conversation turned on ghosts and ghostly experiences. Finally, that every element of good conversation might be present, Scott told the anecdote—newer than than now—of the meeting of Dr Johnson and Adam Smith. Moore could hold his own, whether as talker or listener, wherever good talk was going, but his special moment of triumph was usually when the guests joined the ladies and the piano was opened. This evening—Sunday though it was—Anne was preparing to open the instrument, but her father demurred, and then immediately found a solution which at once satisfied his old-fashioned respect for the Sabbath and gratified his passion for hospitality. The Fergussons must come back to dinner the next day and bring the two old Misses Fergusson—the Weird Sisters of Huntly Bank—with them. Scott was never quite easy if these old friends were left out of any entertainment.

The following day Scott did for Moore what, in those latter days, he only did for specially congenial guests, took him all over Melrose Abbey. It was a principle with Scott—dating from the old days at Lasswade, when he would not permit his companions to interrupt the droning tale of the old lady who showed Roslin Chapel—never to forestall the custodian's favourite points. At Melrose he and the old sexton were tried friends, and helped each other out with old tales and architectural points. The carriage had been dismissed, and the two poets proposed to walk home through the grounds, but first Scott, who could not pass a friend's house, and who knew, moreover, that the old ladies would like the compliment, took Moore in to wait upon the Misses Fergusson.

Unconcerned with the part he was himself to play, Moore had leisure to notice with pleasure "the plain, quiet, neighbourly manner with which Scott took his seat among the old maids, and the familiar ease with which they treated him in return: no country squire with but half an idea in his head could have fallen into the gossip of a humdrum visit more unassumingly."

The wicked fairy who creeps in at the christening of so many literary men, and, after the other godmothers have made their brilliant offerings, bestows the poisonous gifts of envy and detraction, had fortunately been absent from the little back-parlour in Dublin when Moore was christened. He could see the houses and lands of his brother poet, and hear of his large editions without a pang. But there were other elements in Scott's life which were absent in his own, and Moore had a clear perception of the true values of things which his frivolous social life had been powerless to dim. It was this, more than his wit and literary fame, that had won and kept for him the friendship of such men as Lord John Russell and Lord Lansdowne. So as they walked up the Rhymer's Glen, and Scott talked on about Napoleon and



Cromwell, Moore, in his sub-consciousness, continued to appraise his companion's history and conditions, and all at once one of his swift impulses of self-knowledge rose from the depths and found utterance in confidential speech.

"I said," so runs the record in his Journal, "how well calculated the way in which Scott had been brought up was to make a writer of poetry and romance, as it combined all that knowledge of rural life and rural legend which is to be gained by living among the peasantry and joining in their sport with all the advantages which an aristocratic education gives. I said that the want of this manly training showed itself in my poetry, which would, perhaps, have had a far more vigorous character if it had not been for the sort of *boudoir* education I had received." Scott of course dissented courteously, and Moore, who was no egotist, dropped the subject. But in the words "a boudoir education" he graphically characterised the early influences that had moulded his genius.

A small house above a grocery shop in Dublin, cramped in room for all the sociability of which it was the scene, an easy-going insignificant father, a small, vivacious, affectionate mother, passionately ambitious for her son, but knowing no nobler objects of ambition than school triumphs and introductions into genteel society; parties in the crowded parlour, school speech days—above all, private theatricals, and Master Tom the joyous self-elected leader at them all,—certainly these conditions offer a curious contrast to Smailholm Tower and "bickers" at the High School, and days spent on Salisbury Crags weaving romantic tales to an audience of one, and George Square with a sick-bed piled with chronicles and romances.

In his talk with Scott Moore added, "The only thing indeed that conduced to invigorate my mind was the strong political feelings that were stirring round me

when I was a boy, and in which I took a deep and ardent interest." Yet it is just on this point that Moore was under a delusion,—a delusion shared by all his contemporaries. Byron, in the dedication of the 'Corsair,' says in perfect good faith, "Ireland ranks you among the firmest of her patriots." Shelley hailed him "as the sweetest singer of her saddest wrong." Warm-hearted Ireland toasted his name and sang his songs and gave banquets in his honour. All the world was in a conspiracy to allow this favoured child to indulge in sentiment and to avoid sacrifice. It began when he was a bright-faced boy at Dublin University in the critical years of 1796-1798. His impassioned singing of "Let Erin Remember" caused his fellow-student, Robert Emmet, to start from his chair, exclaiming, "Oh, that I were at the head of two thousand men marching to that air!" Moore himself tasted the fearful joy of reading aloud to his parents an anonymous article of his own in a seditious paper called 'The Press,' for the household politics were all on the side of rebellion. But in all his actions and opinions Moore had to reckon with the devoted, domestic despot, the little mother of whom he wrote so fondly:—

"Yet thou still art so lovely to me,  
I would rather, my exquisite mother,  
Repose in the sunset of thee  
Than bask in the noon of another."

And for no cause, human or divine, would that mother have risked a lock of his curly head. So, at her earnest entreaty, Moore contented himself with partaking of the excitement and generous stirring of heart of the times, and the very conspirators themselves among his fellow-students guarded him from all knowledge of their secret oaths and counsels and plans, and "so I escaped all share in that wild struggle to which so many better men fell victims." It was the same with Moore's claim

to represent the heart of the Irish people by his songs, to interpret her poetry to an appreciative English public. He left Ireland as a boy of nineteen, and only returned for flying visits, to be fêted by the public and entertained at Dublin Castle. He knew no word of Erse,—indeed when shown some Erse MSS. after the publication of his history of Ireland, he declared that had he known of the existence of such things he would never have undertaken to write history at all. Of the popular Irish literature still alive on the lips of the Irish people, the satires of wandering minstrels like “Blind Laffan,” he was as profoundly ignorant as Miss Edgeworth herself. Never in his life had he sat beside a peat fire or talked to any man nearer the soil than a witty cab-driver. So little was he aware that to be a national poet a man must love his native soil, her rivers and mountains, with intimate worshipful affection, that he notes as a literary discovery that Scott’s poetry gained much from the introduction of the names of actual places. Yet not only the England of his day but Ireland too accepted him as the poetic exponent of the soul of Ireland.

Perhaps the Celtic spirit is always playing at hide-and-seek with her anxiously appreciative oppressor, and the delicate fairy cadences and wistful melancholy of the Irish poetry of to-day may be no nearer the soul of Ireland than the

“Tear on the cheek and the smile in the eye”

that Moore caught and expressed in a hundred dancing metres. It does not exactly describe a national poetry this description, meant as a eulogy by one of his friends: “The poetry of Thomas Moore makes no appeal to an ignorant and angry multitude, it looks much higher to its audience,—it is found upon the pianofortes of the rich and the educated, of those who can afford to have their national zeal stimulated.”

Moore was a singer more than a poet. A responsive

drawing-room audience was the condition of his inspiration, and such an audience must have what it can readily feel without an effort of imagination. Moore gave it exactly what it wanted. Scott uttered what all the world was thinking when he said, "As a song-writer none of us can touch Moore." "That's fame, Tom," said Byron delightedly when a boat passed under the balcony where they were standing at Richmond, with a young party singing 'Love's Young Dream.' If one extreme of society spoke in the person of the Irish link-boy at a London party—"Call for me, Misther Moore, sure I'm the boy that pathronises the Melodies"—the extreme of wit and fashion in the person of Luttrell gave charming expression to the universal popularity of the songs.

"They say, dear Moore, your songs are sung—  
Can it be true, you happy man?—  
By moonlight in the Persian tongue  
Along the streets of Ispahan."

At every dining-table Moore's squibs moved the men—the Whig men—to laughter, in every fashionable drawing-room Moore's singing of his own songs moved gentle hearts to tears; and he sniffed the incense and joined in the laughter, and enjoyed the tears, and somehow through it all contrived to preserve his manliness and to keep the respect of his fellows as only a light-hearted Irishman could have done. He had elected to rise in the world by his social gifts, and society accepted him without exacting more than he was willing to give,—his single-minded attention, most of his time and all his charming personal gifts. It meant frivolity, of course, and the absence of other ideals, but in his case it did not mean sycophancy, and it did not exclude self-respect and jealousy of his own independence.

By the exquisite phrase, "imputed gentility," Charles Lamb describes his own habit of dreaming himself

into a kind of identity with the dignified people who grow up in such mellow old mansions as Blakesware. But "imputed gentility," such as a man might enjoy sitting in an old coat in his homely room in the Temple, would have had no meaning for Moore. "Appropriated nobility" would more nearly describe the *bien-être* which Moore only experienced in the houses of the great,—houses with historic picture-galleries and famous libraries, where the host was a Cabinet Minister (or rather Leader of the Opposition, for Moore stuck staunchly to the Whigs), and all the guests bore names famous in politics and literature or society. Politically Moore might fairly consider that he was worth his salt to the Whig party. His political satires are as light and stinging as a swarm of midges—a swarm that loved to settle on the fat, fatuous form of the Prince Regent. With a seditious poem in his wallet for my Lord and a melting song for my Lady, his welcome was well-earned at Chatsworth or Bowood or Holland House. In London Holland House was the centre round which he fluttered, at ease among guests all hall-marked as wits and conversationalists, valued by the charming host and not more insolently treated by my Lady than others, his betters. He had fixed his home in the neighbourhood of Bowood, the house of Lord Lansdowne, and the meeting-place of all that was distinguished, both English and foreign. During such weeks as he spent at his own cottage, Moore dined, sang, slept, and enjoyed himself at Bowood four days a-week. Yet moving in these circles and sharing their privileges with complacence, Moore did not blindly accept their standpoint as final; he kept always the curious detachment of a child of Fortune, one who belongs to no class but attaches himself to the one which affords him most amusement. He was too quick-witted to fall into the tasteless stupidity of snobbishness. On his first coming to England Lord Moira, to forward his interests, had introduced



him at Carlton House, and the Prince Regent, much taken with the witty young Irishman, tried, with a too persistent curiosity, to trace his connection with sundry well-born Irish Moores. After repudiating half a dozen noble kinships, Moore cut off all further inquiry by the information: "Sir, I am the son of the honestest tradesman in Dublin."

The one unfortunate result of this "appropriated nobility" was that it made Moore uneasy in other simpler but more distinguished society. In 1823 he was present at a dinner at Monkhouse's—one of the most memorable of the century—where Wordsworth and Coleridge talked metaphysics, Rogers listened appreciatively, and Charles Lamb hovered round, filling the pauses with inspired irrelevancies. Crabb Robinson, also present, remarked "that only Mr Moore did not seem to be enjoying himself." And Moore himself fretfully sums up the party, "Lamb a clever fellow certainly, but full of villainous and abortive puns; Coleridge said some tolerable things."

It was one of Moore's luxuries to hold fast to the idea of "independence." He had no means of his own; he was generous beyond his powers to needy relatives; he received large sums from his publishers, but earned them with reluctance. He frankly disliked work, especially highly paid work done to order, and in London his weekly expenses in cabs and gloves alone equalled—so Rogers spitefully delights to tell us—the sum on which Mrs Moore kept the rest of the household for a week. But his richer friends with one consent plotted to smooth his path without laying him under the burden of pecuniary obligation. When a defaulting agent in Bermuda involved Moore in liabilities he could not meet, Rogers, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord John Russell all came forward with offers of help. Moore refused their aid, preferring to escape from the shadow of a debtor's prison to the Continent, where he spent several crowded happy years

in Italy and Paris, but hardly effected marked economies! Meanwhile, Lord Lansdowne had paid off the debt secretly, which, when Moore learned, he gracefully repaid the loan—with a draft on Longman's for work to be done at some future time. For publishers were as generous as peers in their dealings with Moore. As for the Memoir which Byron had confided to Moore at Venice, it seems to have been as negotiable as a bank bill, so often did Moore receive advances on it, and then buy it back from Mr Murray. But in the final surrender of the MS. to Lord Byron's family Moore showed a fine disinterestedness, and had to pay dearly for it. He had raised £2000 on it, and Lord Byron's executors, instead of arranging with the publishers to make this good to Moore, had roused his pride by offering him the money as a gift. When Rogers urged the plea of his family as a reason why he should accept the money, Moore replied, "More mean things have been done in this world under the shelter of wife and children than under any pretext worldly-mindedness can resort to." And the generous woman who practically paid the price of this magnanimity never even counted the cost.

For, while all the world was conspiring to bestow too easily on Moore the honours due to the politician, the patriot, and the poet, this fond conspirator succeeded in convincing herself and him that he was the truest of lovers and kindest of husbands. If to the reader of Moore's journal the singular charm of his married life seems wholly due to the tender woman who took the cares of the small income into her own anxious keeping, who filled the long days of his absence with motherly duties and kind offices to poorer neighbours, yet welcomed him home with the girlish delight of earliest love, who so instinctively understood his shrinking from pain that she held her own beautiful head between him and his dying child that no painful

impression should haunt his memory,—if all the strength as well as all the grace seems to belong to the wife, one must remember that it is Moore himself who has drawn for us the picture of his incomparable Bessie. He might love pleasure and flattery and fashionable society, he could not refuse an invitation, he left his handsome wife economising while he warbled at other women's pianos, but never was he for a moment forgetful of her immeasurable worth. If she were well-contented what have we to say?

Moore was habitually too much in the rush of the world to stop and consider his ways, but he had momentary illuminating flashes of self-knowledge, as in this autumn walk with Scott, as in a solitary emotional hour watching a sunset on the Seine at Neuilly. He has expressed this mood in a devout little poem familiar to a former generation, now fallen into undeserved neglect:—

“Ah, 'tis not thus the voice that dwells  
 In sober birthdays speaks to me ;  
 Far otherwise, of time it tells  
 Lavished unwisely, carelessly :  
 Of counsels mocked, of talents made  
 Haply for high and pure designs,  
 But oft, like Israel's incense, laid  
 Upon unholy, earthly shrines.

. . . . .  
 How little of the past would stay,  
 How quickly all would melt away !—  
 All but that Freedom of the mind  
 That hath been more than wealth to me.  
 Those friendships in my boyhood twined,  
 And kept till now unchangingly ;  
 And that dear home, that saving ark,  
 Where Love's true light at last I found,  
 Cheering within when all grows dark  
 And comfortless and stormy round.”

If Moore recognised a little sadly the difference between Scott's plan of life and his own, it is inter-

esting to find Scott summing up the points of difference between them. Byron was in the habit of bracketing him and Moore together, both in his published poetry and in conversation, and Scott confessed himself "curious to see what could be in common betwixt us, Moore having lived so much in the gay world and I in the country, and with people of business; . . . Moore a scholar, I none; he a musician and artist, I without knowledge of a note; he a democrat (!), I an aristocrat; besides his being an Irishman and I a Scotchman, and both tolerably national. Yet there is a point of resemblance and a strong one. We are both good-humoured fellows, who rather seek to enjoy what is going forward than to maintain our dignity as lions, and we have both seen the world too widely and too well not to condemn in our souls the imaginary consequence of literary people who walk with their noses in the air."

Precisely what Byron had said of them :—

"Men of the world, who know the world as men,  
Scott, Rogers, Moore, and all the better brothers,  
Who think of something else beside the pen."

It was because Scott and Moore were both "good-humoured fellows" that they could meet in 1825 without a resentful recollection on the one side and an uneasy one on the other of a certain satiric squib written in 1812.

The unprecedented success of Scott's three earliest poems had not unnaturally been something of a trial to other poets. The comparative failure of 'Rokeby' brought balm to more than one poetic bosom. Wordsworth, stooping from his habitual serenity, applies a stupid epigram to Scott's poems :—

"He writes his verses with huge speed,—  
Faster than printer-boy can set them,  
Faster far than we can read,  
And only not so fast as we forget them."

And Moore, writing to the publisher of the 'Melodies,' says, with a sigh of relief: "Scott's 'Rokeby' has given me a renewal of courage for my poem ['Lalla Rookh']. Did you ever see much worse songs than those in 'Rokeby'?" Posterity regrets that it has no opportunity of assuring Mr Moore that even now

"Brignall Banks are fresh and fair,  
And Greta's woods are green,"

while the "bower of roses by Bendemer's stream" has only the charm—a real charm all the same—of an old-fashioned chintz.

We pardon the gay malice of the following verses because of their real fun, and Scott, always what he calls a *poco curante* with regard to criticism, probably laughed and forgot about the matter, but the publishers were convinced that the squib had helped to check the sale of 'Rokeby':—

. . . . .

"Should you feel any touch of poetical glow,  
We've a scheme to suggest—Mr Sc-tt, you must know,  
(Who, we're sorry to say it, now works for the *Row*),  
Having quitted the Borders to seek new renown,  
Is coming, by long quarto stages, to town;  
And beginning with 'Rokeby' (the job's sure to pay)  
Means to *do* all the gentlemen's seats by the way.  
Now the scheme is (though none of our hackneys can beat him)  
To start a fresh poet through Highgate to meet him;  
Who, by means of quick proofs, no revises, long coaches,  
May do a few villas before Sc-tt approaches.  
Indeed, if our Pegasus be not curst shabby,  
He'll reach, without found'ring, at least Woburn Abbey."

Before Moore left Abbotsford, Scott, laying his kind hand on his shoulder, said, "Now, my dear Moore, we are friends for life."

It was characteristic of Moore's affectionate epicurean nature that when, a few months later, he heard of Scott's



misfortunes, he was so painfully affected that he "almost regretted having been brought so close to Scott, as I might otherwise have been saved the deep and painful sympathy I now feel for his misfortunes. For poor devils like me to fag and to be pinched for means becomes second nature, but for Scott, whom I saw living in such luxurious surroundings, and dispensing such cordial hospitality, to be thus suddenly reduced to working his way is too bad, and I am heartily grieved at it."

Twice again the two poets met, but neither meeting was like the first. When in October 1826 Scott was on his way to Paris to pick up material for 'Napoleon,' Rogers and Moore breakfasted at the Lockharts', "and very merry fellows we were." Scott suddenly proposed that Moore should accompany them to Paris, "there would be plenty of room for him in the carriage, only he must not trample on Anne's frills"—there would have been little question of frills had it been Sophia! Moore seemed disposed to consent, though Rogers jibed at his truant disposition; but meeting Scott a little later, and finding him either preoccupied or forgetful, Moore chose to imagine that Scott had received a hint that his associating with such a "renegado" would have been looked at askance at Court. Moore was under two delusions—one, that a man of Scott's character would have let any one, King or Croker, influence him in the choice of his company; the other, that high officialdom had its eye fixed on the doings of Mr Thomas Moore.

Five years later, when Scott was in London on his way to Italy, he had expressed a wish that Moore would come and see him, and Moore came up to town on purpose. Only Murray and Scott's old friend the Lord Advocate—the "dear loved Rae" of 'Marmion'—were at dinner. Moore was grieved and shocked to see how rarely Scott took part in the conversation, and how changed and vacant his look was in repose. "Still," he adds, "it is charming to see how Scott's good temper and good

nature continue unchanged through the sad wreck of almost everything else that belongs to him."

So wrote Moore,—and one is glad that he wrote it tenderly—all unconscious of the coming years when he too was to sit with darkened windows, dumb and oblivious, and alive only to the two deepest instincts of his soul,—love of song, and clinging fond dependence on his wife.

These are mournful reflections: one would willingly have one's last impression of the two poets as they stood together in the theatre in Edinburgh in November 1825, when the audience rose on Moore's entrance and cheered him with rapture, and Scott "could have hugged them, for it paid back the debt of the kind reception I met with in Ireland."

## LORD BYRON.

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THE earliest reference to Byron in Scott's correspondence is to "a young whelp of a Lord Byron," and considering the provocation the epithet errs on the side of gentleness. In July 1808 Scott was at the height of his poetic fame. 'Marmion,' swiftly following on the 'Lay,' had been received with equal acclamation. The 'Lady of the Lake' was in MS., Scott was staying at Buchanan, the guest of the Duke of Montrose, Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart were also guests, and Scott was enjoying the pleasant earnest of a third success in the delight with which these kind friends and sound critics were listening to his reading aloud of his new poem. Suddenly into the midst of this prosperity was exploded a new satiric poem—sent down from town, where it was enjoying extraordinary vogue—'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' Scott must have been startled to find himself attacked with unprovoked bitterness and insolence. It probably cost him an effort of memory to recall an article in the 'Edinburgh Review' of two years earlier, in which this same young Lord had been treated with contemptuous ridicule. Always gentle to the achievements of others, especially of the young, he had protested—ineffectually—at the time against the severity of the review. The procedure of an Edinburgh Reviewer with new poetry was that of a terrier with vermin,—a pounce, a shake, a triumphant toss of the head, a self-satisfied wag

of the tail. In the case of 'Hours of Idleness,' the reviewer—it happened to be Henry Brougham—found his work made to his hand. Even a retrospective eye can hardly find any note preluding the melody and force and passion of the later Byron, in the schoolboy exercises and in the love poems and elegiac pieces, written for the most part in a dancing metre that in itself precludes depth of feeling. The book was entitled 'Hours of Idleness,' by "a Minor." The minority was insisted upon in preface and footnotes,—indeed the author seemed in a continual state of solemn surprise at his own youth and his own aristocratic birth. Verses like the following were not lost upon Henry Brougham:—

LINES TO A FRIEND.

"And though unequal in thy fate,  
Since title decked my higher birth,  
Yet envy not this gaudy state,  
Thine is the pride of modest worth."

It is evident who is glanced at in this sentence of the preface: "Though accustomed in my earlier days to rove, a careless mountaineer, on the Highlands of Scotland, I have not of late years had the benefit of such pure air or so elevated a residence as might enable me to enter the lists with genuine bards who have enjoyed both these advantages."

Not indeed that the noble author is concerned to pluck any more sprigs of laurel "from groves where I am at best an intruder. . . . Poetry is not my primary vocation. . . . It is highly improbable, from my station and pursuits hereafter, that I should ever obtrude myself a second time on the public, not even in the very doubtful event of present indulgence." All this is very stately and boyish and absurd, and Brougham has little to do but to dot the *i*'s and underline the passages. "Therefore," he concludes, "let us take what we can get and be thankful. What right have we, poor devils, to be nice?

We are well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord's station, who does not live in a garret but has the sway of Newstead Abbey. Again we say, Let us be thankful, and, with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver nor look the gift-horse in the mouth."

Byron was a boy of nineteen, a boy who had introduced himself to the public with ridiculous solemnity, but a boy possessed of a weapon of defence and offence, the force and keenness of which must have startled even himself. He had been made a fool of,—worse, he had been shown to have played the fool, and the young fool at that! He had in his hands, half written, a satire wherein, after the manner of young writers, he had attacked all established reputations. Into this he distilled point and venom, and added bitter strictures on reviewers to contemptuous comments on contemporary poets. Scott was the most prominent Scotsman of his day, he was also a poet,—it was easy for a rash and incensed young author to conclude that he was at the bottom of the hostile review. Byron had picked up the booksellers' gossip—it was no secret—of the price paid, or rather prepaid, for '*Marmion*.' At the end of 1807 Scott's favourite brother Thomas was in difficulties, which "made it convenient, if not necessary, to hasten the publication of the poem"; and Constable, always enterprising, eagerly offered a thousand for it. So great was its success that the jubilant publishers added a hogs-head of claret to the author's profits. Author, publisher, and the public were all satisfied; only the austere virtue of Lord Byron was offended.

"And think'st thou, Scott, by vain conceit perchance,  
On public taste to foist thy dull romance?  
Though Murray with his Miller may combine  
To yield thy Muse just half-a-crown a line.

For this we scorn Apollo's venal son,  
And bid a long good-night to '*Marmion*!'"



"Heaven help the bear who may not suck his own paws," was all Scott's comment to a correspondent; but the gratuitous insolence of the attack had nettled him.

Having mortally insulted all but three or four contemporary men of letters, Byron said good-night to his native land; and four years later 'Childe Harold' took the world by storm.

Scott had not much sympathy with the cynical pose of the poet, though he admits to Morritt that it gives a piquancy to the other undeniable beauties of the poem.

The first effect of Byron's extraordinary success was to reconcile him to all his former objects of attack. Moore met him with a challenge and became his greatest friend; Lord Holland's charm of manner and character caused the young poet such compunction, that at his request he suppressed the new edition of 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' Where others were complacent, Scott was not likely to be implacable. After this first petulant attack on Byron's part there was to be a constant grace and nobility in the relation of the two poets, as of two rival Paladins.

When the 'Giaour' and the 'Bride of Abydos' appeared, Scott bowed only too readily to the breeze of popular favour which, deserting 'Rokeby' and the 'Lord of the Isles,' was swelling the sails of the new poems; at least his loyal friend Joanna Baillie declared (at a later date) that only his own Guse Gibbie would have been so blind to the comparative merits of the poems.

If Scott thought too much of popular opinion in valuing poetry, his own and other men's, one must remember that he was the last of the Minstrels, the last of—

"The simple race, who waste their toil  
For the vain tribute of a smile."

Public favour was to him what the smiles of lord and lady gay were to his predecessors; if his song ceased to please, let another more skilled tune his lay.

Even Scott's generous temper might have been tried if the fickleness of public favour had left him, like Campbell, to dread comparison with his early self, or like Southey to appeal to posterity against contemporary neglect; but at the very moment when James Ballantyne admitted the damping fact that the verdict on the 'Lord of the Isles' was "disappointment," the MS. of 'Guy Mannering' was lying on Scott's desk, and 'Waverley' was convincing the world that a new joy had come into being.

Byron had a compunctious sense that his own extraordinary success had injured the elder poet; perhaps also he wished to acknowledge that the metre and swing of the new poems had been suggested by Scott's. At anyrate, the presentation copy of the 'Giaour' which Ballantyne on that same occasion borrowed from Scott bore the inscription, "To the Monarch of Parnassus, from one of his subjects."

It was in 1812, that wonderful year when society lost its head, and the feminine half of it its heart, to the beautiful young lord who combined in his own person the mystery of the Giaour, the fascination of Selim, the world-weariedness of Childe Harold, the dark hauteur of Lara,—it was at the very zenith of his day that Byron entered into friendly correspondence with Scott. The Prince Regent and Mr Murray, the diplomatic publisher of Albemarle Street, were the unconscious and conscious peacemakers.

To entertain one poet with the praises of another would not vulgarly be considered the finest tact in a royal personage, but the Prince Regent took Byron's measure accurately when he passed delicately over his own poems and warmly eulogised Scott's. These praises retailed to Murray, and reported by him to Scott, gave Scott a pleasant opportunity of directly addressing Lord Byron. The frank cordiality of the letter is only increased by the dignified little explanation of the

'Marmion' incident which Scott felt it due to himself to give.

There is a boyish sincerity in Byron's reply: "I feel sorry that you should have thought it necessary to notice the evil words of my nonage, as the thing is suppressed voluntarily, and your explanation is too kind not to give me pain. The satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wit and my wrath, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions." Experienced maturity looking back regretfully on early follies was itself only twenty-four years old!

In the summer of 1814, when Scott was in London, the two poets were introduced, and met almost daily in Mr Murray's drawing-room. Scott scouts as affectation a remark in Byron's later journal to the effect that he disliked literary talk. In Albemarle Street, at least, he was content to listen by the hour to Scott retailing that curious and attractive lore of which his mind was full, or repeating the old ballads which came so readily to his lips. Once when Byron left the house his looks were so disturbed that a friend asked what had moved him so much. Scott had been repeating his beloved ballad of "Hardyknut." Is there in the history of literature a more curious incident than that Scott, in Murray's drawing-room, should have repeated to Byron Coleridge's "Christabel"? Think of it, the music of Coleridge in Scott's deep rhythmic chant with Byron's eloquent face as commentary! The poem was not published till two years later, but Scott had carried it in his memory since he had heard it read by John Bowring at Lasswade in 1804.

Mr Murray's son used to give a vivid description of the two poets, each markedly lame, hobbling downstairs and stumping up the street together. The two faces are the most familiar in the whole of English literary history,—the one homely and shaggy, with power in the

brows and sweetness in the large sensitive mouth; the other—in Scott's phrase—"a countenance to dream of." We even know in what garb each appeared. Leigh Hunt tells us that at this period Byron habitually wore a black coat and white trousers; as for Scott, Lord Cockburn's description of his appearance in evening clothes would probably hold good of his London suit: "he looked just like any other ill-fitted gentleman."

Scott easily took the measure of Byron's weaknesses; he noticed his sudden suspicions, suspected him of a love of mystifying, especially with regard to that dark and deadly past at which he was so fond of hinting, but he had found by experience "that a plain downright steadiness of manner was the true mode to maintain his good opinion." Himself the manliest of men, and choosing his friends among men of character and knowledge of the world, Scott, as a romance-writer, was powerfully drawn to dark, mysterious characters, men with a past like Bertram and Cleveland, or foredoomed to an ominous future like the Master of Ravenswood. Byron appealed on the one hand to his romantic imagination, on the other to his brotherly kindliness.

Hamlet, moving in his mourning suit among the trivialities of the Danish Court, his melancholy lit by fitful playfulness or satiric flashes, is not a more romantic figure than the young Byron in his first success as Scott limns him with firm delicate touches:—

"Everything in his manner, person, and conversation tended to maintain the charm that his genius had thrown around him, and those admitted to his conversation . . . felt themselves attached to him not only by many noble qualities but by the interest of a mysterious, undefined, and almost painful curiosity. . . . Mirth, gaiety, indignation or satirical dislike, frequently animated Lord Byron's countenance, but the prevailing expression was that of melancholy, . . . of deep and habitual thought. . . . The enthusiastic looked on him to admire, the serious with the wish to admonish, the soft with a desire to console."



Even society gossip in Scott's hands takes on the complexion of tragic romance. He mentions the case of a lady—probably Lady Caroline Lamb—who, entering a room, saw Byron for the first time across a sea of faces, and exclaimed, "That pale face is my fate!" He adds, "Poor soul, if a godlike face, godlike powers, could have made any excuse for devilry, be sure she had it."

The last time Scott saw Byron was in 1814, when he with Scott of Gala was on his way north after their visit to Paris. There was a luncheon-party, and Mathews, the comedian, had kept the merriment up to a high pitch, and the party broke up with laughter.

Then in quick succession came Byron's marriage in January 1815, the mysterious break in his domestic relations in 1816, the outcry, the horrible publicity, the wailing on the housetops, the indignant flight of the poet, the dust of his native land shaken from his feet, and in the autumn the publication of the third part of 'Childe Harold.' Byron's powers worked best under the goad of resentment. In revenge for imagined wrongs he flung at his ungrateful (but most indulgent) country a poem which made her hold her breath, so full was it of power, of superb passages, of sustained thought, of cries from the heart none the less poignant because they lacked justice and decent reserve. Scott hardly shared Wordsworth's distaste for personal talk; he had the ordinary man of the world's interest in current gossip, but he keeps scandal and tittle-tattle out of his correspondence. The feature most distasteful to him was Byron's taking as confidantes of his woes "half a dozen blackguard London newspaper editors." He illustrates the matter humorously from his own nocturnal experiences: "In the meantime, I think my noble friend is something like my old peacock, who chooses to bivouac apart from his lady, and sits below my bedroom window to keep me awake by his screeching lamentation." But his abiding feeling was "deep sorrow and regret that



a man possessed of such noble talents should so deeply and irretrievably ruin himself."

Whether Scott offered to review the new poem in the 'Quarterly' or was asked to do so by Gifford is immaterial,—it gave him the opportunity he wanted to hold out a hand to Byron, to make possible to the wayward genius a return to wholesome normal life and the regard of all good men. Even Lockhart's *Life* and the *Letters and Journal* give us an incomplete idea of Scott's goodness if we leave this article in the 'Quarterly Review' unread. In gentleness and gravity and restrained emotion it stands alone among critical writings. The nearest parallel to it is Johnson's *Life of Savage*. In both two men of sterling goodness are writing of men whose weaknesses and waywardness were most opposite to their own characters. In both admiration for unusual powers and pity for unusual misadventure preclude alike censure and excuse. In both the author has entirely forgotten himself,—Johnson in pleading with the world for milder judgment on the dead poet, Scott in the more delicate task of reconciling the living poet to a world he suspected and affected to scorn. In reading both these noble essays one is reminded of an aphorism of an old Chinese sage: "The evil man will not forsake his wickedness till the good shall have lost even the remembrance of his goodness."

In the critical part of the review, after singling out the Waterloo episode for praise, Scott characteristically regrets the political prejudice which precluded "the note of triumph with which his harp would otherwise have rung over a field of glory such as Britain never reaped before." But Scott's main affair is with the poet, not the poem.

"With kinder feelings towards Lord Byron no person could approach him than ourselves. We shall touch—it is our duty—on the uses for which he was invested with his talents, and happy shall we be if in discharging it we could render this distinguished author a real service."

The Scottish instinct of preaching was not in Scott's blood as, for our great advantage, it was in Stevenson's, but attentive readers are alive to a vein of gentle, often pensive, moralising that runs through the novels. But here, in this message to Byron, we have a nearer approach to a complete exposition of Scott's theory of the conduct of life. He begins by saying that "there is no royal nor poetical path to contentment and heart's ease," but he proceeds to lay down certain wise rules which humble pilgrims might be well content to use as an itinerary of the way:—

"To narrow our wishes and desires within the scope of our present powers of attainment; to consider our misfortunes as our inevitable share in the patrimony of Adam; to bridle those irritable feelings which, ungoverned, are sure to become governors; to shun that intensity of galling and self-wounding reflection which our poet has described in his own burning language; to stoop, in short, to the realities of life, repent if we have offended, and pardon if we have been trespassed against; to look on the world less as our foe than as a doubtful and capricious friend whose applause we ought as far as possible to deserve but neither to court nor to condemn,—such seem the most obvious means of keeping or regaining mental tranquillity."

The more direct appeal to Lord Byron at the end is prefaced by a compliment at once so splendid and so serious as to compel a patient hearing. "We are compelled to dwell upon this subject, for future ages, while our language is remembered, will demand of this: Why was Lord Byron so unhappy?"

"Lord Byron [he goes on] may not have loved the world, but the world has loved him, not perhaps with a wise or discriminating affection, but as it is capable of loving any one; and many who do not belong to the world, as the world is generally understood, have their thoughts fixed on Lord Byron with the anxious wish and eager hope that he will bring his powerful understanding to combat with his irritated feelings,

and that his next efforts will show that he has acquired the peace of mind necessary for the free and useful exercise of his splendid talents."

When the 'Quarterly' reached him Byron was at Venice, plunged in those deliberate profligacies with which he deadened his own thoughts and outraged public opinion. The review must have felt like a quiet hand laid on his shoulder. His attention had been first drawn to it by Mrs Leigh, whose anxious sisterly affection had been soothed by "its most feeling and kind nature." Byron wrote promptly to Murray to find out the identity of the writer,—it seems odd that he had any doubt on the matter. "What with public opinion, politics, &c., he must be a gallant as well as a good man who has ventured in that place and at this time to write such an article even anonymously. . . . It is not the mere praise, but there is a delicacy, a tact throughout, not only in regard to me *but to others*,<sup>1</sup> which, as it has not been observed elsewhere, I have doubted if it could be observed anywhere. . . . Perhaps some day you will let me know the writer's name." Later on, when Murray had given the desired information, he writes to Moore: "Scott's is the review of one poet on another, and that other his friend. . . . Now that I know it is his it cannot add to my good opinion of him, but it adds to that of myself." Precisely the result for which the review was written.

At an earlier date, when the favourite literary discussion was the comparative merits of the two poets, Byron had impatiently deprecated the comparison: "I like the man and admire his works to what Braham calls 'entusy musy.'" This enthusiasm increased with the appearance of each of the Waverley novels. They were the only books that Byron was urgent with Murray to have sent out to him. He had hailed 'Waverley' as

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 305, "Joanna Baillie."

"the best and most interesting novel I have read since I don't know when." He quotes from it more than once; indeed, he has such minute quotations from all the novels as might puzzle a professed student of Scott. 'Waverley,' 'Guy Mannering,' 'The Antiquary,' he had left behind when he quitted England in 1816. But in 1821 he writes: "My love to Sir Walter Scott, tell him to write more novels; pray send out 'Waverley' and 'The Antiquary' and 'Guy Mannering'; it is five years since I have had a copy, and I have read the others forty times."

This message, with variations, had occurred also in 1820: "My love to Scott; I shall think higher of knight-hood ever after, for his being dubbed. Why don't you send me 'Ivanhoe' and the 'Monastery'?"

He especially affected the Scottish novels. He had somewhere in his nature a sentiment which he could doff and don at pleasure for the country where, as he tells us, "I was bred a moderate Presbyterian." In 1822 he writes to Scott: "To me those novels have so much of 'auld lang syne' (I was bred a canny Scot till ten years old) that I never move without them, and when I moved from Ravenna to Pisa they were the only books I kept with me, although I have them already by heart."

When 'Tales of my Landlord' appeared, with the figures of Balfour of Burley and the Black Dwarf, Mrs Leigh, to whose simple understanding misanthropy was the invention and monopoly of her brother, was convinced that he was the author. "If you knew me as well as she does," Byron writes to Murray, "you might have fallen into the same mistake."

Finally, when Byron made up his mind to devote his life and fortunes to the cause of Greek liberty, it is touching to find him expressing his resolve in a quotation generalised from 'Old Mortality,' 'Redgauntlet,' and 'Waverley.' "At any rate," he writes, "I shall cast in my lot with the pair Hill Folk; for it shall never be

said that I engaged to aid a gentleman in a little affair of honour, and neither helped him off with it or on with it."

In 1822 Byron dedicated "*Cain: A Mystery*," to Sir Walter. Beautiful and audacious as it is, this speculative poem seems hardly an appropriate offering to Scott. Byron felt this, and would have preferred associating Scott's name with the romantic drama, "*The Two Foscari*," but the notes to that poem contained one of the scurrilous attacks on Southey which supplied the diseased part of Byron's brain with constant excitement. If it came to parting with either the dedication or the attack, the issue never hung doubtful.

The public never credited Byron with dramatic intentions. The speculations of *Cain*, the defiant dogmas of *Lucifer*, were accepted as the confessions of Lord Byron. To Scott all such speculations were indifferent if not distasteful, but he felt bound to defend the poem so flatteringly inscribed to himself. The defence was, perhaps, more humorous than ingenuous. Readers who identified Lord Byron with *Lucifer*, he said in effect, might as well credit himself with lifting his neighbour's cattle in company with William of Deloraine.

The great service Scott rendered to Byron was providing him with at least one friendship in which there was no room for suspicion, no possibility of caprice. There is an eager sincerity in Byron's defence of Scott against Stendhal, who, in a pamphlet, while paying a tribute to Scott's genius had added that "his character was little worthy of enthusiasm"—probably an illiberal prejudice current among Continental Liberals.

"I have known Walter Scott long and well," writes Byron, "and in occasional situations which call forth real character, and I can assure you that it *is* worthy of admiration,—that of all men he is the most open, the most honourable, the most amiable. With his politics I have nothing to do, . . . they differ from mine, . . .



but he is perfectly sincere in them. I say that Walter Scott is as nearly a thoroughly good man as man can be, because I know it by experience to be the case."

This was Byron's constant attitude towards Scott. Lady Blessington noted how, in talking of Scott, Byron's colour changed to a more lively hue and his eye became humid; never had "he appeared to such advantage. Poor Byron!—for poor he is even with all his genius, rank, and wealth—had he lived more with men like Scott whose openness of character and steady principle had convinced him that they were in earnest in their goodness, . . . his life would be different and happier." All lovers of Lord Byron's nobler parts share Lady Blessington's regrets.

The news of Byron's death in March 1824 fell upon England like a thunderclap. Nothing gives one a more startling view of the place he occupied in the imagination of his countrymen and countrywomen than the effect that the news of his death, told suddenly in a provincial parlour, had on a girl of quick sensibility and romantic imagination. Jane Welsh, writing to Carlyle, says: "I was told it all alone in a room full of people. If they had said that the sun or the moon was gone out of heaven it could not have struck me with the idea of a more awful and dreary blank in the creation than the words, 'Byron is dead.'" In a remote Lincolnshire rectory, Alfred Tennyson, a boy of fourteen, cut on a stone in his father's garden the momentous fact, "Byron is dead."

To Scott Byron's death was a personal sorrow. He had always believed Byron capable of some great practical activity; he had lately been hearing from Admiral Sir F. Adam, home on leave from the Mediterranean, of the soundness and practicality of Byron's plans for the cause, and the respect in which he was held by the Greek chiefs. Writing to Lady Abercorn in June 1824, Scott says: "I have been

terribly distressed at poor Byron's death. In talents he was unequalled, and his faults were rather those of a bizarre temper than those arising from any depravity of disposition. He was devoid of selfishness, which I take to be the basest ingredient in the human composition. He was generous, humane, and noble-minded, when passion did not blind him."

Byron never was at Abbotsford, though he once sent Scott a playful message that he meant to come and "sweat his claret for him." Yet among the many figures that people that rather fantastic hall—figures of living cheerful men and women and children—stands one, beautiful and aloof, the ghostly figure of Lord Byron as Scott one instant saw him from his library door.

## WORDSWORTH AND SOUTHEY.

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It is difficult to resist the temptation to claim Wordsworth as a Scotsman—at least a Scotsman spiritually,—so truly has he touched the soul of the land, so intimately felt the life of her humbler children. And in return, to this dweller beyond her borders the country showed aspects of gentle and solemn beauty unrecorded by her own children, either too intent on the grand and romantic incidents of her scenery, like Scott and Hogg, or like Burns, so near to her familiar nature that he cannot separate her in thought from the toil and suffering and merry-making of himself and his fellows.

Neither Wordsworth nor his sister Dorothy had had any connection with Scotland till, in the autumn of 1803, they journeyed through Highlands and Lowlands in an Irish car under changing skies. At once the country yielded up the secret of her spell to these single-minded pilgrims. Oppressed by the barren austerity of the greater Highlands, other travellers had had recourse to vague Ossianic imagery,—flying clouds and mists, caverns and sombre valleys. Wordsworth, leaving all that on one side, reached to the indwelling spirit:—

“It is not quiet, is not ease,  
But something deeper far than these.  
The separation that is here  
Is of the grave, and of austere  
Yet happy feelings of the dead. . . .”

As each new prospect opened up of loch and valley, Dorothy Wordsworth's eye instinctively sought the little square of brilliant green or ripening yellow by the loch-side, or painfully won from the barren slope of the hill, telling of the patient toil of generations:—

“For I, methinks, till I grow old,  
As fair before me, shall behold  
The lake, the bay, the waterfall,  
And thee, the spirit of it all.”

Not the gathering of the clans, the fluttering of tartans, the loyalty of the clansmen to the chiefs, of the chiefs to the lost cause—in a word, not the Highlands of Scott—made appeal to Wordsworth's imagination, but the “natural sorrow, loss or pain” of the patient crofter folk or the “old unhappy far-off things” of forgotten people. Even Scott's own Yarrow kept for this long-delaying lover her most secret charms, her “meek loveliness,” her “pastoral melancholy,” her “pomp of cultivated nature.”

It is the same with the religious life of the country. Burns knew it in his father's house and wrote the “Cottar's Saturday Night”; he had felt the blight of its harshness, and also wrote “The Holy Fair.” Scott paid it due respect, though he felt the baldness and occasional grotesqueness of its forms, but Wordsworth instinctively understood thought and speech:—

“Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,  
Religious men who give to God and man their dues.”

In the bosom of the Scottish Church in every generation, quiet, strong men have silently outgrown her dogmatic teaching, and yet have submitted the guiding of their lives to the “strong hand of her purity.” Practical sagacity, strong reflective powers, a demeanour at once independent and tolerant,—such fruits of that early austere training did Carlyle recognise and honour in

his own father, such did Wordsworth imagine in the character of his Wanderer. Such households as that on "the small hereditary farm" of Athol have honourably distinguished Scotland in her poverty among Christian nations:—

"A virtuous household, though exceeding poor,  
Pure livers were they all, austere and grave  
And fearing God ; the very children taught  
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word,  
And an habitual piety maintained  
With strictness scarcely known on English ground."

Nay, more, this understanding stranger had said of Scotland's own two poets the words their lovers most delight to recall. Not the noisiest Burns enthusiast has entered so genially and subtly as this "water-drinking bard" into the condition of Tam o' Shanter when "the various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and happy composition of elated spirits." Nor can the gravest censurer of Burns stand before the sudden sweep of Wordsworth's noble charity:—

"But why to him confine the prayer,  
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear  
On the frail heart the purest share  
                                With all who live?  
The best of what we do and are,  
                                Great God forgive !"

The praise of Burns Wordsworth has condensed into one perfect phrase:—

"Deep in the general heart of men  
His power survives."

It is even more striking to find Wordsworth saying the perfect word about Walter Scott, a contemporary poet, and one whose genius he but partially understood and certainly undervalued. The moment was one of high emotion. Wordsworth, himself feeling the weight



of infirmity, had come to Abbotsford on Scott's urgent invitation in the autumn of 1831. He found his host a broken man, wistfully lingering among familiar scenes on the eve of his journey to Italy. Hill and river in the pensive splendour of the autumn sunset seemed to share the sadness of him who had loved them so well, and to them and to him Wordsworth bears a message from the whole sympathising world:—

“Lift up your heart, ye mourners, for the might  
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;  
Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue  
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows,  
Follow this wondrous potentate. . . .”

If we would find the friendships of Wordsworth we must not look for them where with most men they are found, in intimate talk, in the free utterance of letters and journals, in the delight of praise frankly expressed: in correspondence, footnotes, and reported conversations we shall find Wordsworth critical, disparaging, even grudging. It is only when he is in his native element of pure poetry that his judgments of other men are worthy of himself.

The first meeting of Wordsworth and Scott was at the end of the Scottish tour in 1803,—the poet and his sister, shabby and travel-stained travellers, arriving at the Lasswade cottage before either Scott or Mrs Scott was out of bed.

There is no book of travel the least like Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*. Just because it is mainly concerned with the Earth, her lights and shadows, moon-risings and sun-settings, and with the comings and goings of simple folk, it seems to tell of some “unsubstantial faery place,” and not of this common world of all of us. All through the Scottish tour we have been on a new and lovelier ‘*Pilgrim's Progress*.’ Figures of unnamed folk have a curious significance, as of travellers on the same

pilgrimage. A solitary woman sitting motionless in a field wrapped in a grey cloak, and further down the valley a decayed cottage below a blasted tree, are like a symbol of desolation. At another spot three boys come over the brow of the hill with hats braided with honeysuckle, and run after one another as "wanton as the wind," leaving on the reader's mind a touch of beauty as of a classical design. On the side of Loch Katrine a woman seen against the sunset sky asks with gentle Highland voice if the travellers are stepping westward, and the strange, sweet phrase opens a vision of Heaven before their eyes. So it is with a kind of shock that we emerge at Lasswade into the daylight of familiar biography. When Mr Scott joins the pilgrimage one would wish that the Wordsworths had had more the habit of personal talk, and that they had not so quietly taken him for granted while they so picturesquely and vividly describe their Jedburgh landlady. Everywhere, indeed, they had seen faces light up when they mentioned the Shirra's name. "I believe that by favour of his name one might be hospitably entertained throughout all the Borders of Scotland." Scott was their guide at Melrose and Jedburgh, telling the tale of every Border keep within range; he read the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' to them in their lodgings—Wordsworth later confided to Rogers that he had not thought much of the poem; he had sent up Yarrow for Willie Laidlaw to come and enjoy these rare strangers; had time served, he would have carried them into the wilds of Liddesdale, where, as he said, he had a home in every farmhouse. Yet somehow these last chapters of the Journal leave on one a vague sense of disappointment.

Yet it is pleasant to know that "Yarrow Unvisited" was written "not without an eye to pleasing Scott." On receiving it in MS., Scott planned to write an invitation to Ashestiel in the same measure, but unfortunately did not carry out his intention.

From this time onward friendship between the two poets was cordial and sincere,—so sincere, indeed, on Wordsworth's part, that it would have strained the cordiality of any other poet. When Scott sent him a copy of 'Marmion,' he wrote: "Thank you for 'Marmion,' which I have read with lively pleasure. I think your end has been attained. That it is not the end I should wish you to propose to yourself, you will be well aware from what you know of my notions of composition both as to matter and manner."

The letter goes on to record the song of another singer, more important to Wordsworth than all the works of all his contemporaries: "A gentle shower has fallen this morning, and I hear the thrush who has built in my orchard singing amain."

It is nothing to say of Scott that he was free from the detraction and envy said to beset literary men; it *is* something to find that the carping criticism which his immense success could not but awaken in other poets never withstood the sunshine of his presence. Southey was not without this weakness of the literary character, but about Scott's poetical successes he was conscientiously cordial, though he consoled himself by reflecting that in "Thalaba" and "Madoc" he had planted acorns for a future growth, while Scott's poems were like the growth of Turkey beans.

Long after Scott was dead Wordsworth summed up the worth of his poetry thus: "As a poet Scott cannot live, for he has never in verse written anything addressed to the immortal part of man." Perhaps not; perhaps romance and patriotism and loyalty of man to man, and high spirit and the love of youth, belong only to the mortal part of us. Scott's contemporaries, both those who blamed and those who extolled, thought only of his narrative poems. Had Wordsworth never read "The Sun upon the Weirclaw Hills," nor "Sound, sound the Clarion," nor "When Israel of the Lord beloved"?

It is fair to add that he prefaced the remark—it was said at Mrs Fletcher's tea-table in her house at Ease-  
dale—with these words: "I do not like to say all this,  
. . . especially in the presence of my wife, who thinks  
that I am too critical." It is indeed pleasant to know  
that that most faithful lady had a mind of her own,—  
a "very elegant mind" Rogers calls it—and could at  
times differ from her husband. When Wordsworth had  
written spitefully to Rogers about 'Rokeby,' he adds this  
postscript: "Mrs W., poor woman, says with a kind of  
sorrowful smile, 'This is spite, for you know that Mr  
Scott's verses are the delight of the times, and thousands  
can repeat scores of pages by heart.'" Somehow it was  
easy to fall into a depreciatory vein writing to Rogers.  
In 1814, on the eve of publishing the 'Excursion,' Words-  
worth writes: "I shall be content if the publication pays  
the expenses, for Mr Scott and your friend Lord Byron  
flourishing as they do, how can an honest poet hope  
to thrive?"

Between his passion for the open road and the weak-  
ness of his eyes, Wordsworth was so little of a reader  
that he probably left most of the Waverleys unread,  
but on 'Waverley' and 'Guy Mannering' his criticism is  
explicit. Of the latter he says: "The adventures are  
not well chosen nor invented; and they are still worse  
put together; and the characters, with the exception of  
Meg Merrilies, excite little interest." 'Waverley' at least  
heightened Wordsworth's opinion of Scott's talent, but  
of the Baron Bradwardine he says: "Such caricatures  
require a higher condiment of humour to give them a  
relish than the author of 'Waverley' possesses." Few  
passages of literary criticism afford one more delight  
than this complaint of the author of "Betty Foy" that  
the creator of "Dandie Dinmont" lacks humour.

Scott on his part had his own thoughts about Words-  
worth's poetry, modestly and thoughtfully expressed, and  
discreetly confided to the "Gurnal."

“Not that I think the amiable bard of Rydal shows judgment in choosing such subjects as the popular mind cannot sympathise with. It is unwise and unjust to himself.” He lays his finger on the weakness of Wordsworth’s poetry when he says: “The error is not in you yourself receiving deep impressions from slight hints, but in supposing that precisely the same sort of impression must arise in the mind of men otherwise of kindred feeling, or that the commonplace folks of the world can derive such inductions . . . under any circumstances.” But the interest of the passage is that Scott is insensibly drawn into one of his visits of self-inspection, as rare with him as they were constant with Wordsworth. “I do not compare myself, in point of imagination, with Wordsworth—far from it; for his is naturally exquisite, and highly cultivated by constant exercise. But I can see as many castles in the clouds as any man, as many genii in the curling smoke of a steam-engine, as perfect a Persepolis in the embers of a sea-coal fire. My life has been spent in such day-dreams.”

So far the two poets on one another as poets. As men, the genuine affection and respect between them was more warmly expressed—probably more warmly felt—on the part of Scott than of Wordsworth. Writing to Southey in 1810 he says: “How does our friend Wordsworth? I won’t write to him, because he hates writing as much as I, but I often think of him, and always with affection.”

London, with its social rush and depressing habit of being witty, always tried Scott, especially when infirmities grew upon him. In 1828 he was staying with the Lockharts, sitting to Chantrey and Northcote, and with several invitations for every meal. Going with Lockhart to call on the Quillinans, he fell in with Wordsworth, “right welcome unto me. I was glad to see my old friend whose conversation has so much that is fresh and manly in it. I do not at all acquiesce in his system of



poetry, and I think he has injured his own fame by adhering to it. But a better and more sensible man I do not know than W. W."

Wordsworth's bald sincerity gives value to his sober utterances. In 1830, when he heard of Scott's first seizure, he writes to Rogers: "Dear Sir Walter! I love that man, though I can scarcely be said to have lived with him at all; but I have known him for nearly thirty years."

In the summer of 1805 Scott and Mrs Scott visited the Wordsworths at Dove Cottage, that small beloved home where the chimneys smoked so constantly that the long, low, upper room, where Wordsworth kept his few hundred books in a recess, was used as kitchen as well as parlour. In the Wordsworth economy, as in the Wordsworth poetry, a fact was sacred simply by right of being a fact. And consequently Mrs and Miss Wordsworth, without any self-consciousness, cooked the leg of mutton in the same room where it was afterwards eaten. The mutton was perhaps a concession that frugality made to hospitality, for in this same year Rogers had noted the frequent absence of animal food from Wordsworth's table with a consternation rather amusing to our half-converted vegetarian days. A diverting tradition lingers in the countryside that Scott was driven for his modest daily potation to a neighbouring inn—probably the Swan, whose allurements the "Waggoner" successfully resisted. On going up one day with Wordsworth to bespeak horses, Scott was greeted by the landlord with, "Ah, Mr Scott, you've come early to-day for your glass." Whatever the entertainment, Scott was well content with it. "Wordsworth," he writes to Miss Seward, "is such a character as only exists in romance—virtuous, simple, and unaffectedly restricting every want and wish to the bounds of a very narrow income, in order to enjoy the literary and poetical leisure which his happiness consists in."

If Wordsworth has left his memorial in Scott's country so that no one can travel up Yarrow without being haunted by his words, in return the noblest of Wordsworth's mountains lends the music of its name to Scott's opening line—

“I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn.”

The incident—the traveller killed on the mountain and watched for three months by his dog—has been treated in verse by both Wordsworth and Scott. It is curious that Wordsworth takes as central interest the very point one would have thought most interesting to Scott. A strange break in the order of nature is the instinct which prompts the dog alone among animals to forsake his kind and to force his way into human companionship by sheer dint of loving. At every turn of Scott's life that love had waited for him at his study door, had leapt through his study window, had bounded to meet him at his gates. When his thick-coming troubles threatened to overwhelm him, it is of these dumb friends he thinks. “I find my dogs' feet on my knees, I see them whining and seeking me everywhere,—this is nonsense, but it is what they would do if they knew.”

Now the Westmoreland peasant, who in his youth took service at Rydal Mount, was emphatic in denying that Wordsworth had any liking for animals. “Naay, naay, Wudsworth was no dog-fancier; and as for cats, he couldn't abide them, and he didn't care for sheep and horses a deal.” Yet in this poem Wordsworth puts his finger on the root of the mystery:—

“How nourished here through such long time,  
He knows, who gave that love sublime,  
And gave that strength of feeling, great  
Above all human estimate.”

When Wordsworth and Scott climbed Helvellyn on this occasion, they had as companion Sir Humphry

Davy, already old enough to be distinguished in science and still young enough to be haunted by those spiritual and romantic impulses which made him in early days hesitate between science and literature. An MS. book kept in his youth bears a curious symbol of this hesitation. On one of the vellum covers he had drawn a lyre, on the other a lamp surrounded by a laurel wreath. At Clifton, where he was assistant to Beddoes, he had made the acquaintance of Southey and Coleridge. While he intoxicated them with oxide gas they inspired him with their ideas, especially their new and spiritual conception of nature. In those days Southey referred to Davy as "the young chemist, young poet, young—everything!" There is a passage in Sir Humphry's journal which shows how earnestly he was trying to adopt the Wordsworthian attitude. "To-day, for the first time in my life, I have had a distinct sympathy with Nature. I was lying on the top of a rock to leeward, the wind was high and everything in motion; the branches of an oak-tree were waving and murmuring in the breeze; yellow clouds, deepened to grey at the base, were rapidly floating over the western hills; the whole sky was in motion, the yellow stream below was agitated by the breeze; everything was alive, and myself part of the series of visible impressions. I should have felt pain in tearing a leaf from the trees." This is Wordsworth elaborated: and indeed at this time Davy seems to have been impatient of all discourse other than metaphysical or poetical. In spite of his lameness Scott scrambled along "Striding Edge" with vigour, telling as he went "many anecdotes and amusing stories, as was his custom." But Davy, disappointed of the philosophical discussion he looked for, had no ears for Scott's stories, but rather impatiently parted from his friends at the top. A few years later things had changed,—he had become a lion and a man of society; his old associates mourned

over him as lost to the cause, and Coleridge wittily nicknamed him the "Theo-Mammonist."

Sir Humphry's boyish writings had a trick of turning out prophetic. He once wrote an allegory in which Justice, Peace, and Virtue protest against the creation of Woman! If he had rewritten the poem in middle life Science might have joined in the protest. The lady who wrought havoc in the sage's life was a cousin of Sir Walter's (*more Scotico*), a Mrs Apreece, a widow. She was a sort of Corinne, with dark eyes, wit, an eloquent tongue, and a harpsichord. The match came about naturally enough. She had blue-stocking aspirations as well as social; he was accustomed to carry all before him, and she was a prize run after by other distinguished men of his acquaintance. He was "the happiest of men," of course; at the time of the marriage he wrote confidently: "In a few weeks I shall be able to return to my habits of study and of scientific research. It is a fair prospect of happiness with the most amiable and intellectual woman I have ever known." He *never* returned to uninterrupted habits of study and research. Scott sums up the situation with painful clearness and brevity. "She has a temper, Davy has a temper, and these tempers are not one temper but two tempers; . . . they quarrel like cat and dog, and let the world see it." One asset this marriage brought to Sir Humphry, —intimacy at Abbotsford. Neither fashion nor domestic discomfort had broken his habit of high discourse on speculative themes. Lockhart describes the talk carried on between him and Scott till deep into the night: "Scott in his romantic narratives touched a deeper chord of feeling when he had Davy for a listener; and Davy, when induced to open his views on any scientific question in Scott's presence, did so with a clear energetic eloquence of which neither his habitual talk nor his prose writings suggest a notion. I remember Willie Laidlaw

whispering to me, 'Gude preserve us! this is a very superior occasion! Eh, sirs,' he added, cocking up his eye like a bird, 'I wonder if Shakespeare and Bacon ever met to screw each other up.'"

On leaving Dove Cottage in August 1805 Scott paid a visit to Southey. He had made his acquaintance in Edinburgh the previous year, when Southey had easily distinguished his quality from the alert shallowness of the *literati* of the 'Edinburgh Review.' In some ways Scott started with more common ground with Southey than with Wordsworth. Both loved old books, both were working in the fascinating field of old romance, but Scott was in no doubt as to the relative quality of the two Lake poets. It is the misfortune of a strenuous life—and Southey's was strenuous and responsible to the pitch of heroism—that it leaves little leisure for mere companionableness, for the fulfilment of that amiable commandment, "If he ask thee to go a mile, go with him twain." When Southey took an hour off his tasks—those tasks so necessary and so well performed—to bestow on a friend, his talk was informing, aphoristic, epigrammatic—a little fatiguing. "In conversation," writes Scott to Miss Seward, "he is inferior to Wordsworth. He rarely allows you any of those repose of conversation when you are at liberty to speak 'whatever comes uppermost.'" With charming modesty Scott adds, "But in return, if an idle fellow like me is sometimes a little *géné*, he is at least informed, and may be the wiser and better from all he hears. What I admire in both is an upright, un-deviating morality in all they think and say and write."

The constant proffer of good offices on the one hand, and of acceptance on the other, is a serious strain on any friendship: that the friendship of Southey and Scott knew no alteration from the constant care Scott took of Southey's fortunes, argues as much generosity on the one part as on the other. Scott was concerned at the small reward Southey drew from his poetry, and offered to be



his intermediary with the enterprising Constable. The 'Edinburgh Annual Register' provided Southey with £400 a-year for several years before it fell into the Serbonian Bog of the Ballantyne business. Scott never hesitated to use his interest with Ministers to help a friend. In 1809 he and George Ellis had engaged Canning to provide some Government post for Southey, or some augmentation of pension—a scheme rendered abortive by Canning's going out of office. An alternative plan for benefiting his friend shows incidentally Scott's estimate of professors and their qualifications. "There are professors' chairs both in England and Scotland frequently vacant, and hardly one . . . for which you are not fitted already or capable of making yourself so on short notice. . . . What would I not give to secure you a chair in our Northern Metropolis!"

To write, as Scott did in 1813, to persuade Southey to accept the laureateship which he himself had refused required considerable tact. Scott hit on the only diplomacy possible with a proud man and worthy of a kind one, perfect frankness. "If you quote my own refusal against me, I reply: first, I have been luckier than you in holding two offices not generally conjoined; secondly, I did not refuse it from any foolish prejudice against the situation—otherwise how durst I mention it to you, my elder brother in the Muse?—but from a sort of internal hope that they would give it to you upon whom it would be so much more worthily bestowed. For I am not such an ass as not to know that you are my better in poetry, though I have had, probably but for a time, the tide of popularity in my favour." This Scott wrote with sincerity, this Southey believed with even deeper conviction.

To return to the autumn of 1805. There was an unexpected but glorious sequel to the Scotts' visit to Lakeland. To Gilsland, where he and Mrs Scott were tranquilly reviving the memories of their brief courtship, came flying rumours of beacon-fires and of imminent

invasion. By hard riding Scott reached the mustering-place, Dalkeith, covering a distance of a hundred miles within twenty-four hours, arriving in time to laugh over the scare and to glory in the prompt response of the Borderside.

Earlier in the same year Wordsworth had had misgivings over his own indifference to public events,—“the factious brawls about Lord Melville, ravages of the French in the West Indies, . . . fleets of ours roaming the seas in search of enemies whom they cannot find; and I have asked myself more than once lately if my affections can be in the right place, caring so little as I do about what the world cares so much for.”

Yet when it came to a clear issue, to a nation fighting for its existence, and in the struggle realising its true life, Wordsworth felt with a passion unknown to lesser men. The cause of Spain might have been that of England, so closely did her first heroic resistance to Napoleon lie on his heart. When the Convention of Cintra dashed the hopes of Spain and seemed to belie the promises of England, Wordsworth could not keep silence. Then, in his hands, the noble English he had learnt from Milton became again “a trumpet.” Too long and too weighted with thought and emotion to be effectual as a political pamphlet, the fine rhythmical prose of the *Essay on the Convention of Cintra* remains in our literature a pendant to the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty and National Independence.” Lamb, always caught by noble language, wrote to Wordsworth: “Its power over me was like what Milton’s pamphlets must have had on his contemporaries.” Scott, like other high-spirited men, was smarting under a sense of national blundering. In a letter to Southey, signed “Yours in great grief of spirit,” he writes: “I have read Wordsworth’s lucubrations in the ‘*Courier*,’ and much agree with him.”

As the years went on Wordsworth’s views on political

and social questions more and more approximated to Scott's, though one had started from the practically republican society of Cumberland statesmen and had gone round by the French Revolution, and the other, brought up in the feudal tradition of the Scottish Border, had passed through the narrow gate of Edinburgh Parliament House Conservatism. The long Napoleonic wars gave passion to the patriotism of the Englishman of that generation. With the Peace came economic pressure, social disturbance, the menace of revolution in the air, and on the other side the rallying of all conservative forces to stand by the old order and to resist change.

After meeting Wordsworth in 1817 Dr Chalmers said of him, "I always felt attracted to Wordsworth by his love of the common people." This love of the "common people" was as near Wordsworth's heart when he was a prejudiced Tory, pledged to resist the Reform Bill, as when, in the French Revolution, he had hailed a new era of liberty and love. This feeling for the dignity of the calling of the common people and the sacredness of their affections lay at the root of Wordsworth's patriotism and of his religion. "The most sacred of all property is the property of the poor," he wrote to Fox in 1801. "Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,"—but indeed a hundred passages from his prose and verse attest this ever-present feeling. Yet there was little intercourse between him and his peasant neighbours. "He was not a man as folks could crack with nor not a man as could crack wi' folks," said one; "A desolate-minded man, ye know," was another depressing comment; "Mr Wudsworth would pass you same as if you were nobbut a stoan," said a third.

Scott, too, loved "the common people," but differently, with a kindly, human intimacy. He knew every Jock and Jean about the place, every toddling Eppie Daidle about the doors. There was not a cottage or farmhouse within miles where the Shirra was not at home with his

joke for the individual humour, his sympathy for the clearly remembered troubles. Even in his overflowing kindness he was jealous of the independence of his tenants and servants, he was proud of his Scottish people, of their stoical virtue, their brains, their piety. "I have read books enough," he once said to Lockhart in a vein of gentle reflection, "and observed and conversed enough with eminent and splendidly cultivated minds too, in my time; but I assure you I have heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor uneducated men and women, when exerting the spirit of severe yet gentle heroism under difficulties or afflictions, or speaking their simple thoughts as to circumstances in the lot of friends and neighbours, than I have ever met with out of the pages of the Bible."

Wordsworth of set purpose chose the subjects of his poetry from humble and rustic life, "because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer, more emphatic language. . . . The language of these men has been adopted because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived." As a theory of poetic style, Scott would have scouted these ideas—but quite unconsciously he acted on them. The passages of highest pitch, of deepest feeling, of most romantic content in the novels, all come from the lips of simple folk,—from Edie Ochiltree and Meg Merrilies and Robin Oig MacCombich and Bessie Maclure.

From a set of ordinary circumstances—the love of a peasant for his hereditary fields, the grief of a father for a son fallen on evil ways—Wordsworth by intense meditation has created the solitary figure of Michael sitting in his unfinished sheepfold. We think of him as we do of Job: both are near us because their sorrows are the natural sorrows of the race, both are removed from

us because both are conceptions of a poet transfiguring fact.

With Scott imagination, quickening memory and acting through sympathy, has given us Saunders Mucklebackit mending the crazy boat that has drowned his son Steenie; and we know that we have met Saunders before, and to-morrow will traffic with him again, and his sorrow is none the less poignant that it can snatch but one hour from the coarse needs of every day.

When either Scott or Wordsworth spoke or thought of the "common people," it was the country people they had in mind—tillers of the soil, shepherds, sailors, workers at time-honoured trades; of the proletariat growing up in industrial centres, "the manufacturers," as factory hands were then called, both had the same uneasy dread, looking on them much as old civilisations looked on the hordes of barbarians hanging on their borders.

The industrial development, the political changes consequent on the Reform Bill, threatened the old social order—the content and virtue of the poor as much as the influence of the landed; and to both poets the path seemed to lead down into disorder, chaos, and revolution.

On that last visit to Abbotsford in 1830 the two elderly men mourned together over the attack—so they considered the Bill—on the Constitution in which both so devoutly believed,—that Constitution which offered to Wordsworth's mind "the sublimest contemplation which the history of society and government have ever presented to it."

One can imagine Wordsworth ejaculating fervently: "May God forgive that part of them who, acting in this affair with their eyes open, have already gone so far toward committing a greater political crime than any recorded in history." And Scott replying: "The Bill—with a plague to it—is the most uncalled-for attack upon a free Constitution that ever was ventured in my day!"

Time has falsified the fears of these patriotic, public-



spirited, prejudiced old poets. Time, that makes our politics obsolete, only makes our gardens old-fashioned. Gardens, plantations, all that dealt with landscape, furnished another interest common to Wordsworth and Scott. On these matters Scott considered Wordsworth's taste infallible. One principle they had both arrived at separately. Scott was determined not to banish the smoke of the labourer's cottage from the view commanded by his windows. Wordsworth's advice to Sir George Beaumont on the laying out of Coleorton was: ". . . Let your house belong to the country, and not the country be an appendage to your house. . . . Let the house be surrounded by the best graces that a country can have, . . . flourishing fields and happy-looking houses." The "common people" and their rights were never long out of the thoughts of either Scott or Wordsworth. Scott shut no one out from the short "Rod to Selkirk" (so Tom Purdie spelt it on the sign-post) which ran through the Abbotsford grounds; and Wordsworth conscientiously went out of his road to pull down a wall that a new-comer had built across an old right of way.

What Keats has called "the sublimated Wordsworthian egotism" of the poetry was in the man Wordsworth a habit that rather wore out his friends. Even Mrs Wordsworth had been noticed by an American devotee to smile gently over a prolonged exhibition of it. In 1818 Keats, himself full of reverence, was vexed to find that "Wordsworth had left the impression wherever he visited of egotism, bigotry, and vanity." Moore invented the word "soliloquacious" to describe his talk; Haydon's hero-worship had worn thin when he wrote, "Scott's success would have made Wordsworth intolerable, while Wordsworth's failure would not have made Scott one whit less delightful." Probably, of all his compeers, Scott was the least disturbed by Wordsworth's egotism, because he had no corresponding instinct craving an audience.

A humorist and delineator of manners, he was as alive as other men to the foibles of his friends, but he had habitual distaste for criticism and depreciation. "A tendency to satire" was a fault he disliked in his daughter Anne; the same quality in superlative degree often made him anxious about his son-in-law. In the 'Life' Lockhart's loyalty to Scott and his sense of the sacredness of his task kept out his personal antipathies—except in the case of poor Hogg. But in his private letters to his wife Lockhart takes a little holiday from the reticence and good-nature which Scott quietly imposed on all his household in their dealings with society. In 1825 Scott, Anne Scott, and Lockhart, on their return from Ireland, turned aside to the Lakes to see Canning and to visit Wordsworth. The Rydal Mount party with their guests drove over Kirkstone to Keswick, Lockhart evidently restless and fuming under the ladies' habit of "aping the Stamp-master's enthusiasm both as to nature and verse." Scott had everybody else's poetry by heart, and in the face of Wordsworth's mountains delighted in quoting Wordsworth's poetry. "This I remark once for all," writes Lockhart, "that during all these rides the Unknown was continually quoting Wordsworth's poetry and Wordsworth ditto, but that the great Laker never uttered one syllable by which it might have been intimated to a stranger that your Papa had ever written a line of verse or prose since he was born." This was very characteristic. Rogers describes with great glee Wordsworth at Althorp, sitting in the most famous library in England with a volume of his own poetry in his hand.

In the summer of 1831 Sir Henry Taylor brought Scott a message that Wordsworth intended to visit him later in the autumn. He answered: "Wordsworth must come soon or he will not find me here." Scott probably referred only to his Italian journey, but the message had a serious note, and though Wordsworth was at that time

suffering severely from his eyes, he and his daughter set off late in September, and the last days Scott spent at home were spent in Wordsworth's company. The visit lasted from a Monday to a Thursday. The house was full when the new guests arrived,—the Lockharts, the Liddells, William Allan, the painter, and Major Scott. Wordsworth sat with a green shade over his eyes between Scott and his own daughter. Mr and Mrs Liddell sang, and Mrs Lockhart chanted ballads to her harp, and Mr Allan told and acted funny stories: it was a sort of ghost of the old Abbotsford evenings. Then Scott began talking of other tired romance-writers, Smollett and Fielding, who had gone South to look for a renewal of life and power and who had found death; and Wordsworth regretted the lack of comfort and consideration that should have surrounded their last days. With an exquisite tact, born of the heart and prompted by quick wit, Lockhart spoke rather of the last ride of Cervantes to Madrid, and of the rapture of the student who had ridden with him all day, and only at the end discovered who he was. Always alive to what is romantic and picturesque, Scott bade Lockhart fetch the *Spanish Life* and translate the passage. "He listened with lively though pensive interest." Mr Allan had already noted the likeness of Wordsworth to Milton, emphasised by Wordsworth's closed eyes. It was as if great spirits, alive and dead, were meeting in that room.

The next day the Liddells had left, and Mrs Lockhart had gone to London to prepare for her father's reception. There was a painful strain in the unspoken anxiety of the household. When a heroic soul makes its fight against fate, one is apt to forget the poor, little, unheroic lives that may be crushed in the struggle. Anne Scott did her best; her father recognised this, both when he wrote in the first days of disaster, "Anne bears her misfortunes gallantly," and in a touching heading in 'Woodstock' which Lockhart distinctly says refers to Anne:—

"Come forth, old man—thy daughter's side  
 Is now the fitting place for thee :  
 When Time hath quelled the oak's bold pride,  
 The youthful tendril yet may hide  
 The ruins of the parent tree."

It was not her fault if the frail brain and nerves failed at times under the strain. Anxiety had made her querulous and flighty. The Wordsworths were struck by the grave tenderness and patience with which her brother the Major met her many fretful expressions. After leaving Abbotsford, Wordsworth and his daughter found that each had fears for the brain of their poor little hostess—fears too sadly fulfilled, when a year after her father's death Anne died of brain fever.

When Wordsworth had spoken to Scott of the pleasure that Italy would afford him, he had with a sad smile quoted the lines—

"For when we're there, although 'tis fair,  
 'Twill be another Yarrow !"

Once again Wordsworth visited Yarrow: on the Tuesday the whole party drove up to Newark, and Scott, still walking stoutly, looked his last on his favourite haunts.

Wordsworth writes a little slightly of "Yarrow Revisited": "There was too much pressure of fact for these verses to harmonise as much as I could wish with the other poems." There is less of "the vision"; there are other presences between the poet and the spirit of the place, but instead we have—

"Life as she is—our changeful Life,  
 With friends and kindred dealing."

Yarrow appears under a new and pensive light:—

"To dream-light dear, while yet unseen,  
 Dear to the common sunshine,  
 And dearer still, as now I feel,  
 To memory's shadowy moonshine."

Once again the vision of Yarrow was to appear to Wordsworth. In the waste of reflective blank verse that filled later years, there was one moment when all the old inspiration returned. He had heard of the death of James Hogg. Hogg was of no account to Wordsworth, as those know who have been luckless enough to read the footnotes that accompany the poem. But his death completed the tale of losses which made the years 1832-35 an autumn season in Wordsworth's life.

So now to his eyes a "sober colouring" rests upon the vale of Yarrow:—

"When first, descending from the moorland,  
I saw the Stream of Yarrow glide  
Along a bare and open valley,  
The Ettrick Shepherd was my guide.

When last along its banks I wandered,  
Through groves that had begun to shed  
Their golden leaves upon the pathway,  
My steps the Border-minstrel led.

The mighty Minstrel breathes no longer,  
'Mid mouldering ruins low he lies ;  
And death upon the braes of Yarrow  
Has closed the Shepherd-poet's eyes.

. . . . .  
Like clouds that rake the mountain-summits,  
And waves that own no curbing hand,  
How fast has brother followed brother,  
From sunshine to the sunless land !"



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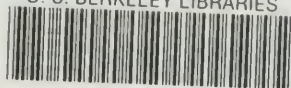
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